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THIRTY-FIVE YEARS

OF A

DRAMATIC AUTHOR'S LIFE.

THIRTY-FIVE YEARS

OF A

DRAMATIC AUTHOR'S LIFE.

BY

EDWARD FITZBALL, Esq.,

AUTHOR OF

"NITOCRIS," "PILOT," "FLYING DUTCHMAN," "SIEGE OF ROCHELLE,"
"MARITANA," "MOMENTOUS QUESTION," "CROWN DIAMONDS,"
"BHANAVAR," "MICHAEL SCHWARTZ," &c., &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
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1859.

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THIRTY-FIVE YEARS

OF A

DRAMATIC AUTHOR'S LIFE.

CAREER AT THEATRES ROYAL.

WEARIED and worn out, as it were, with continued mental exertions, and strong excitements, somewhat disheartened by, if not disgusted with, the selfishness of managers, who were never satisfied with *me*, unless I brought them a *fortune*, instead of a drama, because I had had the fortune, or *mis*fortune to have achieved such a purpose in one or more instances, for others, I fancied that it was a hardship, on the play-writer, from whose brains emanated all that was good to theatres, to be walking to

and fro along the Strand, or elsewhere, while the carriages of managers nearly rolled over him. Under these mistaken, but humiliating reflections, the thought suddenly occurred to me of turning lessee myself. Why not? It was nothing more than to take a theatre, advertise in the Times, make out a good bill, and depend upon a liberal public to pay the rent, and the salaries. How *easy* all that appeared upon paper: if men, with a very slender medium of talent, could make a rapid independency, why, thought I to myself, conceitedly, should not others, with a tolerable share of intellect, do the same thing.

"On what subject are you cogitating?" enquired my wife, who had twice offered me my cup of coffee, without its being accepted. I waved my hand with an air of managerial dignity, for, like the frog in the fable, I began already to inflate myself with the vast importance of my new intention, and to fancy myself seated in my

dictatorial chair in the centre of the stage, giving my directions to the obsequious acting manager and prompter, with an air of frowning dignity and pomposity, such, not unmixed with an occasional smile of kingly condescension, as I had seen *so frequently* assumed, even at theatres royal.

" I was thinking," replied I, mysteriously grand, " that I should turn manager."

" Manager !"

" Yes, manager. I presume, little as you know of theatricals, that you are not unacquainted with the meaning of the word *manager*."

" I think I ought not to be, at all events; but I do not consider that management would suit *you*, viz, theatrical management," replied she, naively turning her mild eyes towards me, with a look of imploring defiance.

" *Indeed !* And pray what do *you consider* would suit me ?" enquired I, facetiously scornful.

" That might be as difficult to answer, as

to write a play:" smiled she. "I certainly consider that you are too nervous, in the first place; and secondly, have too much *feeling* for a manager."

I softened a little, at the latter word, "feeling," my features became less rigid; I took a piece of half-dissolved sugar in the spoon, from my cup, complacently allowed the same to dissolve in my mouth, to try, in my great conceit, whether, or not, sugar would melt there. She saw her vantage ground, and continued,—

"In the first place, while you were romancing, your theatre would be losing; and if you did not romance, your taking a theatre would never answer your purpose; that is to say, I do not conceive it possible for a mind and disposition like yours, to carry out those two important objects, at one time. The idea of the salary day would haunt you *every* day in the week, and begin again on Sunday,—the *little* miseries of a theatre would, unceasingly, be stinging *your* heart; you would have no peace, no rest,

no time; your health would suffer, and, as regards depending on the attractions of anything written by yourself, your very imagination, which, of all things, requires repose and quietude, would take wing and fly away. No, no! remain as you are, be satisfied, at least, for the present; such every-day distresses as you *now* endure, the first ray of sunshine will disperse. But the incumbrances of theatres would be beyond your strength, bodily and mentally; nothing would repay your anxieties. Leave then, management to the conceited managerial actor, the vain managerial author; or, the best manager after all, the managerial speculator. The first two, at least, are repaid in self-estimation; the latter by gains, which bring to him enjoyments only, as cold as his own calculations. Of course you are to please yourself, but, if you ask my opinion, poetry and managership, combined in one person, would bring about anything, save a happy result; nor do I

read, or hear, that at any period, it has proved otherwise."

"I am glad that you have given me leave, however, to please myself," was the somewhat ungracious reply, "but you must allow me, also, the privilege of thinking for myself —that I understand such matters *much* better than you possibly can. *Women* are not *always* right, however weak men may be, to give into their opinions, and by so doing, not unfrequently shut the door upon fortune, who has but just set her foot upon the threshold."

"And what theatre were you thinking of taking?" enquired she, calmly.

"The *Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, of course.* It is advertised here, in the Times, 'to be let,' see!" shewing her the paper.

Rising, she glanced somewhat slightly at the advertisement, smiled a little satirically, I thought, although she was not greatly that way addicted, and giving me back the paper, exclaimed, "Well, *try* it," and left the room

That look, and those two monosyllables, *try it*, piqued me all day long. I felt that even my wife underrated my capabilities. I resolved to convince her to the contrary, to make her *feel*, however attached I was, that she could not exactly wind me round her finger like a thread of silk. And out of such common-place trifles as these, and such weak feelings, what startling events came to pass. It is marvellous. I wrote a proposal to the committee of Covent Garden, making them an offer for the hire of their theatre.

An early post brought me a prompt reply, stating that the committee would be happy to see me, and treat with me, if possible, on the ensuing day.

On the ensuing day, accordingly, I repaired to the theatre. The committee, consisting of Mr. Moore, Captain Forbes, Mr. Charles Kemble, and some others, including their right hand-man, the treasurer, Mr. Robinson, received me with unusual courtesy; they accepted my tender for the theatre. But, then, there was one condition,

namely, a thousand pounds deposit, which said amount, I should have found somewhat awkward to advance. Mr. C. Kemble, who was one of the best friends I ever possessed. made a fine speech in my favour, and the thousand pounds deposit were waived. I became, in fact, by mutual consent, *lessee* of the Theatre Royal Covent Garden.

With a proud step, and an upright gait, I walked—I marvel that I walked—home from the theatre. My wife heard of my treaty with amaze, but whatever her opinion was she was prudent enough to be silent. I began to think about engagements. My first engagement was a musical director, (Rodwell.) It was my intention to produce operatic plays, melodrame, and I know not what else. Charles Kemble, Macready, Warde, Mrs. Glover, Mrs. Warner; in fact, all sorts of sterling talent was to be enlisted, and employed to the best advantage, in tragedy, comedy, and farce. When fortunately, perhaps, for the theatre and the public, a severe malady attacked me, from

over excitement, no doubt, attended with the perfect prostration of my right hand, which seemed absolutely paralysed. It was a very alarming attack, and proved too plainly how very unequal my bodily faculties were to the heavy undertaking I was about to encounter. Every one foreboded a failure; I began to be of the same opinion—in fact, I had not the slightest idea, till I began to work a theatre, what care, what toil, what anxiety, working a theatre absolutely required, especially such a theatre as Covent Garden. How many older and wiser heads, (cold and calculating, too,) than mine, had made the attempt, with thousands upon thousands at command, and failed? I should have reflected, perhaps, on all this before; for, as George Barnwell says—"How wretched is the man that's wise too late." Pride made me, however, shut my ears to the admonition. I resolved, desperately rater than manfully, to plunge, like the Roman, into the gulf, even though it swallowed me. I could not be

tempted to confess that I entertained the remotest idea of my present state of indisposition having been brought on by any mental anxiety connected with the theatre. And yet my feelings recovered a vast deal of their reaction when I received a letter from my old manager, Osbaldiston, congratulating me upon my taking the theatre, he having seen a paragraph to that effect in the papers, and wishing for a *slice* in the speculation. I wrote him word to come to me, which he did the moment he arrived in town; and instead of a slice. I offered him the whole theatre, securing to myself the position of emergency author, at a good salary, for two years. He agreed willingly to my proposal. I introduced him to the proprietors, who saw that I was exceedingly ill, although they unanimously led me to believe that I should have recovered my nervous equilibrium had I been fairly launched, and expressed their regrets at my resolution. I believe they were sincere; but I believe also that I wanted bodily strength, nerve,

and experience to have carried out so vast a design. Osbaldiston became lessee in my stead, and a splendid company he engaged for the campaign.

Oct. 19th, 1835. We opened with "Hamlet." Mr. Charles Kemble, who had but just returned from America, as Hamlet, Henry Wallack, stage manager. The first night, of course, could scarcely have proved other than a bumper; especially as the prices had been considerably reduced to meet the emergencies of the times.

I had now a golden opportunity, it is true, but a very difficult one to avail myself of. I was not a Sheridan Knowles, nor a Sir Bulwer Lytton, to write my piece and retire; mine was the position of a bricklayer, who is engaged in some vast mansion, and when a stone or a brick falls out, to run with his hod, trowel, and mortar, and fill up the gap in the best manner possible; in short, as Ducrow once remarked, and very sensibly, too—"Give Macready his bowl of *pison*, and he's done for." But Mr.

Ducrow wants his uumerous etceteras, such as bridle, saddle, hoops, and flags, or he's *done for* in quite a different way. Fine acting was enough for the great authors above cited, but a little blue fire,) and to know when and where to use it,) was necessary for me; and however the ignorant of theatrical affairs may affect to sneer, without understanding the exact meaning of this expression, I beg to assure them conscientiously, that when, very frequently, a brick, even the keystone, of some great dramatic architect, has been on the verge of falling, from its own ponderous weight, to the ground, a little bit of blue fire, judiciously applied to the " sticking place," has so dried its classic mortar, as to make it remain durable and firm in its position where it remains now. In speaking thus, I do not mean, exactly, the blue light produced by the firework man at the side-scene; or, if I did, I beg leave honestly to deny its origin to myself. It is of a very ancient creation. The unenquiring are not

aware, perhaps, that the Egyptians made use of it in their divine mysteries. But the unenquiring should have enquired far enough to have discovered that it was, also, unquestionably used on the altars in the days of Holy Writ.*

* No really practical author would write merely for an effect he himself did not know how to bring to pass. I will show you the necessity for it:—When Terry had perused "The Flying Dutchman," he said to me, in his usually caustic way—

"We accept your pieee, sir, and mean to do it justice; and, added to your terms, a great risk we run as regards expense."

"In what respect?" I inquired, with deference, of course, to a *manager*.

"What respect sir?" reiterated he, somewhat pityingly, "In respect to the expense of the *ship*. The carpenter's lowest calculation of cost—the very lowest—is two hundred pounds."

"Two hundred pounds!—for what, sir?"

"Timber."

"Timber!" almost shouted I. "Timber for a *Phantom* Ship? My dear sir, that would be an absurdity indeed."

"Of what would *you* compose it?" was the evidently sarcastic reply.

"Of what it is, or rather *ought* to be; and what, instead of £200, would not cost you as many shillings."

This was the moment of interest with the cautious manager, and again he reiterated with greater vehemence—

"But of what would *you* compose it, sir?"

"A shadow."

"A shadow?" laughing incredulously.

Many curious speculations were made as to my ultimate failure or success, as a writer at the theatre Royal, emerging at once from my minor hemisphere so fully into the golden blaze, whether I should singe my waxen wings and fall to the ground at once, like poor, deluded Phæton. At the minor theatres, if I had created blue fire, (as Mr. Egerton generously said on the stage of me,) I had also, it was quite evident, created an audience of my

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" Yes. Purchase a few yards of union, (a sort of glazed calico,) darken the scene by turning off the gas, then, while your invisible chorus, *rendered invisible by the darkness*, sing their corale, draw off the flats, and Mr. Child, a gentleman that I can recommend to you, will throw, with his magic lantern, on the invisible union, a better *phantom* ship than all the ship carpenters in Woolwich Dockyard could build, with Peter the Great to assist them."

Terry looked amazed—*convinced.* Child was sent for. The result is known. At this moment the " Flying Dutchman" has been acted at the least ten thousand nights; and, but for the practical knowledge of its anthor, would, to all intents and purposes, have been d——d the first night. I do not know what our great legitimate dramatic speakers, Mr. D. or Mr. T., at public dinners would say on this subject, or whether they would inquire—why do such things? I only know that my piece was saved, and that it brought thousands to the treasury, and that the

own, who seemed to follow me, a greater recommendation to a manager and his *treasurer*, sad to say, than the divinest aspirations of the most legitimate author that ever breathed. My dramas, such as they were, pleased greatly a large portion of the public, and were the fashion with something more than the middling classes. It now remained to be proved whether that public would follow me into a temple echoing with the *indefinable* and antique yelp—*legitimacy!*

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best dramatic critic of our time thinks as highly of "such things" in their proper *platitude*, as he would of Shakspeare or Socrates in theirs.

In the same piece, when Mrs. Fitzwilliam had to vanish from a bank, a great consultation took place on the stage, as to the *how?* When I found no one could accomplish it, not even the *master* carpenter, I requested that worthy to cut a slit across the canvas, through which she slipped under a certain light—not blue fire—and so great and startling was the disappearance, that the people, almost in consternation, rose in the pit to look for her. And take notice that the greatest effects are always produced by the simplest means, as they are in *Nature*. The astounding effect in the tragedy of "Nitocris," so recently represented at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, (in which many supposed the living and drowned personages were not supported by the *same* actors,) was actually produced by a *single lamp*.

But I find that I must step back here a little, to bring upon my stage one of my most esteemed friends, Mr. Serle, the highly gifted dramatist, author of the "Iron Mask," and many dramatic and other works of great literary merit Serle was a very right-minded and sincere friend. He was stage manager on the occasion of the rehearsal of several of my plays, "Walter Brand," to wit, in fact, played the part, Walter Brand, himself. He would often make remarks to me, in the most kind and gentlemanly way, about different points in my pieces, and, also, my songs. Once, for instance, respecting a line in one of the "Songs of the Birds"—

"Now I sit on a *gossamer* tree."

He wished to know what a *gossamer* tree meant. It was a local error. In the village where I was born and brought up, there grew certain poplars, the under part of whose leaves, being white, when the wind blew them upwards, it gave them the hue of the floating gossamer. For this, the

tree was called there, the *gossamer tree*—a provincialism. Serle, who is a learned man and a real poet, simply and properly wished to set me right on this error. It was too late to correct the mistake; the song is no doubt in Capulet's tomb. But I mention this to guard others, in early life, against a mistaken prejudice. The misconception entered my scared brain that he was laughing at me, and I was annoyed. On the contrary, it was the act of a *real* friend —I acknowledge it here, with gratitude. But how often in life does not inexperienced egotism surround itself with walls, against itself, to shut out the very timely supplies which else would come so timely and so profitably to its relief? And to do full justice to the sincere and kind-hearted character of my friend Serle, you shall now see the good and disinterested service he afterwards rendered me. Mr. Michael Balfe, may his shadow never grow less, had just made his appearance in England, with letters of introduction from some of his

numerous and great aristocratic admirers in Italy, to Mr. Arnold, the then lessee and manager of the English Opera, (the old theatre.) Balfe, whose early musical works had brought him, even then, on the continent, a considerable reputation, wished to compose an opera for Mr. Arnold, for England. It was Mr. Arnold's equal desire that he should do so. A poet was in request: I was the person made choice of *at the recommendation of Mr. Serle!* To Mr. Arnold I was entirely a stranger. Balfe had never heard of me, nor I of him; consequently, all the good result which accrued from this circumstance, I owed to the disinterestedness of Mr. Serle, who, it is more than probable, could have written the libretto ten times better himself.

My first interview, both with Mr. Arnold and Mr. Balfe, was in the presence of my friend Serle, in Mr. Arnold's room in the theatre. A subject for this opera was wanting; at length "Linda de Chamouni," was suggested—I think by Balfe. Although

I was acquainted with the work, strange to say, having read it a few days previously, with no very great relish for its beauties; one of my systems being never to throw what is called a wet blanket over over the suggestions or fire of genius, I immediately adopted the story, rechristening it under the name of the "Siege of Rochelle." I set to work with an ardour and vigilance for which I was *then* celebrated. In a *day* or *two* the first act was complete, and Balfe hammering away, as he could hammer, at his piano-forte. Piece after piece of music flowed, like rich argosies, into the theatre; copyists were set to work, parts distributed, the libretto read by Serle himself, with all possible effect, and, in short, everything conduced to bid fair for the production of Balfe's first English opera at the English Opera House. Who ever could have imagined that this opera would not eventually have been produced at that theatre? Yet so it turned out. The course of a successful

new opera, or a new play, like the course of true love, never did run *smooth*.

I know not up to this moment how it all happened; but, as if by some magical transformation, I found that the new opera, like the Devil on Two Sticks, had contrived to fly *up* through the roof of the English Opera, *down* through the roof of Drury Lane Theatre, and was now transferred into the hands of Mr. Bunn, who, at that time, presided over the then fortunate destinies of the mightier edifice. Although I could not avoid a feeling of regret at what had transpired, after so much kindness, still I had no hand whatever in the change, and was certainly much bettered, in a pecuniary sense by the alteration. Mr. Bunn, always very liberal in his remunerations to authors, paid me much better than I should have experienced at the other house. So now, with my engagement at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden, and my forthcoming opera at Drury Lane, I might have been said to

have been in the zenith of my glory; or, all events, to have made a *bright beginning.*

Osbaldiston's company consisted of G. Bennet, Collins, the singer, Haines, J. Webster, Tilbury, Manvers, C. Hill, Morley, Vale, Rogers, Collet, Mrs. Wm. West, Miss Taylor, (afterwards Mrs. Walter Lacey,) Miss Turpin, (afterwards, as the pantomimists have it, Mrs. H. Wallack,) a charming singer; then there was Mrs. Battersby, Miss Vincent, Mrs. Griffith, Miss Wrighton, and many others that I cannot recollect, with George Rodwell as our musical director: altogether an excellent working company, with Mr. Kemble at the outset, and afterwards poor Power, who opened in Rodwell's laughable farce of "Teddy the Tiler." Power was the best Irishman I ever witnessed on the stage. He was entirely divested of those vulgarities, too often adopted by the representatives of Hibernian character, and possessed the refined and happy art of making them equally droll and amusing, without resorting to such

coarse material. Mr. Kemble and Mr. Power were both stars, neither of them to shine long in our hemisphere; the latter was, unfortunately for himself, and unfortunately for his family, about to repair to America, from which, alas! he was destined never to return. As Power only played three nights in the week, *much against* my *entreaty* to the *contrary*, Osbaldiston hit upon the extraordinary expedient of putting up "Jonathan Bradford" on the off nights; thinking, no doubt, that if it had brought him a fortune in a minor theatre, from the novelty of its representation, in a major one it would bring him, if not another golden shower, a considerable acquisition to the sum already realised. Never was there a greater mistake: for, although I must be allowed to say, in my own behalf as its author, it went quite as well as it had ever done, and the audience was melted into tears by the pathetic acting of Mrs. Wm. West, and laughed as heartily as ever at the drolleries

of Vale, and Osbaldiston made his *first* appearance there, in it, being most graciously received, it was quite out of place, more especially at that peculiar period, when we were so vulnerable to the attacks of the press. Later, perhaps, it might have been better. But Osbaldiston not only fearlessly brought out this drama, but several others of a more melodramatic character, and far less pretensions, which had been represented during his management of the Surrey, giving the theatre the air of a minor theatre; although a great minor theatre was what he originally intended to make it. It was soon "York, you are wanted!" with me! I was expected to fill up the nights wherein Power did not perform, and make the receipts, which, in his absence, fell down to a very bad account, equal, if possible—*if!* This was a somewhat difficult task. I hit upon the expedient of bringing out a musical burletta, as we were rather best off in the vocal department, with Mr. Collins, Bannister, Manvers, Miss Turpin, and Miss

Taylor. Accordingly, I wrote "Paul Clifford," from Bulwer's popular novel; introduced into it a stage coach, and six *real* horses, determined to have a *run* of some kind, and with Rodwell's pretty melodies, the song of "Hurrah for the Road," in particular. The receipts *did actually* rise to the amount required, and sometimes better than the other nights. The papers spoke excellently of us, and *the people came.**

I must here step over again to the rival theatre, Drury Lane, where I had absolutely to fight against myself in the production of my opera, "The Siege of Rochelle," produced, as I perceive by the printed libretto, October 29th, 1835, for although engaged,

* Produced, Oct. 28th, I suppose, for I see in the *Morning Chronicle*, dated the 29th, that there is a very long and very favourable critique on this opera, beginning as follows—

"Fitzball's new musical piece, 'Paul Clifford,' was *completely* and *deservedly* successful. It is almost needless to say that it is founded on Bulwer's novel, some of the most striking incidents in which are very skilfully dramatised. The songs, as regards the music, by Rodwell, are good, and what is unusual, the poetry is good. The piece was given out for repetition amid the loudest acclamations from every part of an excessively *crowded* house."

as I said before, in the hod and mortar line by Osbaldiston, I was not prohibited by my conditions from writing elsewhere, when my services were not in request at his theatre. Many and delightful were the rehearsals of this opera; they flow back to me in sweet melodies of youthful feelings and early dramatic friends—Henry Phillips, Seguin, Wilson, Giubelli, (I never know how to spell his name; at a supper once given to Charles Kean, in the saloon of Drury Lane Theatre, I heard the toast-master pronounce it Jew-Belly,) Paul Bedford, Hallam, Miss Shirreff—charming Miss Shirreff—and pretty Fanny Healey, and the kind heroine of my earliest Covent Garden drama—"Father and Son"—Mrs. Vining.

It was a glorious night, the first night of "The Siege of Rochelle"—one to wish your whole life long the first night of a new play or a new opera. The cram there was, the fashion, the delicious music, the enthusiastic applause, the double *encores*—never had I witnessed anything like it. "Vive

le Roi," "Lo, the early beams of morning," and "When I beheld the anchor weighed," were especial marks of approbation, and had an immense sale at the publishers, then Addison and Beale, in Regent Street. The applause was so unanimous—so *really applause*—for, those who understand it can always tell the real approval from the *clacqueur*—no knocking behind slips by box-keepers. Under any circumstances that is a proceeding more honored in the breach than the observance. So carried away were even persons of the highest consequence by the enthusiasm created by this beautiful music, (thought by many still to be Balfe's best composition,) that people bent over, and nearly threw themselves from the side boxes, next to the orchestra, to congratulate and shake hands with the young composer. They crowned him with a wreath of flowers, and I question, amid all the numerous and brilliant successes of this great artist, (Balfe,) if he ever felt such a delighted heart as on the first night of "The Siege

of Rochelle." It ran nearly the whole season. And the first time Her present Gracious Majesty went in state to the theatre, it was to the Theatre Royal Drury Lane; the "Siege of Rochelle" being performed by *special desire.* There is a celebrated portrait of her Majesty, by Paris, seated in the box.

Still, it would be unfair, not to state here, that, popular as this opera became, its success was greatly accelerated by being bolstered up by the splendid translation of the "Jewess," by

Mr. Planché,

as he could translate, and nobody like him. Of all the dramatic writers in my recollection, there never existed one so careful, and consequently so true in his translations, as this gentleman. He was the author of successful pieces, innumerable, amongst them, the beautiful libretto of Weber's "Oberon," in which the poetry is so sweet, it reminds you of the most exquisite expressions in the "Midsummer Night's Dream," of Shakspeare, without being, in

the least degree, a plagiarism. As a burlesque writer, also, Planché stood unrivalled, he never resorted to the mean trick of personality, so frequently adopted when the dull author has not any real wit of his own; Planchè had brilliant thoughts at his disposal, and knew how to use them, throwing them about like a shower of radient stars. Elegance, taste, all that was refined was his; and what was better than all, *refined* feeling.

The celebrated Moncrief used facetiously to say, from Planché's neat style of writing, that he wrote in white kid gloves. For my own part, I always seemed to entertain an idea that he lived on honey and nectar. Moncrief was a popular dramatist, mostly comic, just before my time; he wrote occasionally for the theatres royal, but his talent was mostly devoted to the Cobourg, (now Victoria,) be it understood, at that period the Cobourg had a company of actors, superior to any, now, in London, with *the* Stanfield as scene painter. Poor Moncrief

eventually went blind, and lived for years in retirement. Amongst his numerous works, he was author of the famous "Tom and Jerry," played with such enormous success, at the Adelphi, under Rodwell's management, and turned the brains of half the Juveniles in England.

The magnificence bestowed upon the "Jewess," by Mr. Bunn, amply repaid him. In recording this magnificence, the fine acting of Miss Ellen Tree, (Mrs. C. Kean, so young, so beautiful,) and of Mr. Vandenhoff, is not to be lost sight of, as materially contributing to the extensive run of that deserving and popular spectacle.

But I must now draw in the horns of my enthusiasm, and retrace my steps into my apartment in Covent Garden Theatre, and reflect what can be done, by myself, against myself, in the rival establishment, to keep up the steam, where I am positively engaged (and well paid,) for two seasons. It has been seen, by the critique from the always kind *Chronicle*, that our houses were crowded

between the two P's, Power, and "Paul Clifford." During this lull, I wrote in the theatre, the comedy of "The Inheritance," from Miss Ferrier's celebrated novel, in which, when produced, Henry Wallack enacted, with great artistic skill, the highly drawn part of Adam Black, and Miss Taylor, Gertrude, in her best style. It was well received, but Messieurs, the reviewers, who had been crying out at the top of their voices, croaking over the house like so many rooks in a rookery, for the "Legitimate Drama," when I gave them a dose of that aforesaid comodity, seemed to think, sneering like Adam Contest, at the sight of his old wife, for whom he had sighed and groaned so long, that there was something after all, more young and stirring, in a bit of the melo-dramatic operatic, with a coach and six *real* blood horses galloping over the stage, and stopped by swell highwaymen. Power, in his turn, produced an Irish piece, written by himself, I believe, "Paddy Carey," I will not be certain of the title, as

I go by memory, having no other reference, but however it was a very droll and excellent piece, and went off remarkably well. But the fact was, whatever Power touched in Irish, turned to gold. Just to prove, as Shakspeare has it, there is "a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the ebb, leads on to fortune." When I first came to London, Power was acting the interesting young gentleman, at the Olympic. Mr. Thomas Rodwell, brother of the composer, was then proprietor of the Adelphi, and himself an author. Having written a regular batch of horrors, the name of which has utterly escaped me, he looked about for a good-looking young man, to play his sentimental hero, something in the style of Rodolphe in "Der Freschütz,", and Power was prevailed upon to come over to the Adelphi and undertake it. I remember that he was dressed in blue and silver, with a vast plume of fine white feathers, and looked uncommonly genteel and handsome. But the piece was too appalling; there was a

scene in a churchyard, where the corpse of a woman rose up, lying on her side, out of a grave, which gave great offence, and the piece failed, at which, the lessee-author was so indignant that he resolved to write no more for the stage; at least, sentimental pieces, and he kept his word—an Irish farce however, was started, I believe by the same author. Wilkinson, the celebrated Geoffrey Muffincap, who was to have played the principal part, was taken ill, and Power, willing to oblige, though not liking to tread so out of, what he imagined his line, still, that the public might not be disappointed, consented to do the best he could in the character, merely for a few nights till Wilkinson should be well enough to take it. The effect he produced was electric, convulsions of laughter and applause followed his personation. Wilkinson never was called on to supersede Power, who, from that accidental circumstance, became *the* Irishman on the stage, of his, I deeply regret to say, brief time, and the national

theatres to which he was quickly transferred, soon found the effect of his proper talent in their treasuries. I think it was to this very circumstance that I, also in my turn, stood indebted for my first introduction to the Adelphi Theatre, having been applied to, to adapt Sir Walter Scott's novel of "Waverly," for Watkins Burroughs and delightful Mrs. Waylett—Burroughs as Waverly; Mrs. Waylett as Davie Galettly; and the immortal John Reeve, Mrs. Nosebag.

When Power quitted us, friend Osbaldiston handed over to me a French drama to translate, speedily brought out under the title of the "Carmelites," in which he himself played, most excellently, Brissac, and John Webster, a very handsome young fellow, the other officer. Tilbury, Miss Turpin, and Miss Taylor and Mrs. Battersby making up the rear. This was a most excellent piece, (I speak of it in French,) I did the best I could with it, but I disliked translating, and I have thought

since, that the title was not well chosen, "Wolves in Sheep's Clothing," the literal translation, would have been much better—and Planché, the judicious Planché, would have so called it. It's reception however, was *good*, the papers spoke of it exceedingly well; Miss Taylor in particular distinguished herself, and contributed much to its success; but Mr. Osbadiston had reduced the prices of the theatre, with the commencement of his management, and the new sort of audience was not to be attracted, however much it might be pleased, by this sort of elegant production, for although the audience laughed heartily, during some sixty nights of the "Carmelites," they would have forsaksn us, but for the coach and horses in "Paul Clifford," for a long time, a *drawing* favourite.

At the suggestion of Rodwell, who was one of the staff-officers of the establishment, Osbaldiston resolved to bring out the "Bronze Horse," as a melo-drama, and I was the engaged person that *must* do it. I was

very sorry for this; I knew that Mr. Bunn was going to a great expense to perform the full opera in a *proper* shape, at Drury Lane. I revolted at what I called, an undermine of talent; I allude to the production of the opera in its proper *musical* form. No remonstrance of mine was attended to. It came to this, that I might give up my engagement, or write the piece. It did not suit me to do the former, and as I knew that plenty of authors, without my scruples, were quite ready to step into my position, with *half* my salary, I set to work as usual, and in a very short space of time, for I was a very *fast young man*, then, the piece was written.

The "Bronze Horse," with Rodwell's music, rather than Auber's, although his was not lost sight of, made a tremendous *furore*. Collins came out wonderfully in a song, "Ah! Maiden Mine," he was *encored* three times of a night. It is astonishing how the public are captivated by a pretty song, with a *good melody* to it, and melody is

after all, the soul of music, say what they will. Rodwell, though not a great composer, was a *first rate* melodist. Shortly after the production of this piece, I was with Mr. Bunn, at Drury Lane Theatre, on some business connected with the "Siege of Rochelle," or, the "Maid of Cashmere," both of which were mine. His opera of the "Bronze Horse," had come out and been coldly received, in consequence of having perhaps, been a little and unfairly forstalled, when Harley came into the room,

"Well," said Mr. Bunn, "what do you think of our 'Bronze Horse?'"

"Why, the fact is," replied the facetious comedian, "I think *nothing* of it."

"Nothing! How so?" asked the stately manager.

"I've not seen it."

"Perhaps you'd like to see it at Osbaldiston's."

"I *have* seen it there, and never laughed so much in all my life."

"Perhaps you were so delighted, you'd like to see it a second time?"

"I have seen it a second time, last night, and laughed even more than I did the first." Bunn looked at me, I looked like a criminal. His generous heart could not withstand it, and he himself burst forth into a loud fit of laughter.

I now remonstrated, very seriously, with Osbaldiston, against my writing *all* the pieces. In the first place, it quite prostrated my mental faculties; in the next, it disgusted both the public, and the press, to see only the works of one man, to say nothing of the abuse of disappointed authors, who wrote the most mortifying critiques. Osbaldiston, however, only sneered at this, while his treasurer, *his* critic, as he called him, made a fair report, but, to my feelings, it was deeply distressing, and I became, in consequence, extremely ill. He always imagined that, *eventually*, I should make another wonderful hit, at Covent Garden, as I had at the Surrey, with

" Jonathan Bradford," and therefore, when he saw that I really was overwrought, he became alarmed, in the same ratio as a man who overrides a willing steed, is afraid he should entirely break down, and be only sold to the knacker. He therefore sent for Milner, the author of the " Jew of Lubeck," produced at Drury Lane, in the time when it was under the management of the committee, of which Lord Byron formed one, and engaged him to translate a piece, then all the rage in Paris, called " Za-ze-zi-zo-zu."

This arrangement having been entered into, to my perfect satisfaction and relief, my brain became somewhat cooler, and I was one morning ruminating in my room, in an easy chair, at the theatre, when Osbaldiston suddenly entered; he was accustomed to come across, what then was called the Aladin bridge, at the back of the flies, and descend by a flight of stairs, into my apartment, whenever he had anything, *mostly disagreable*, to dis-burthen his mind of.

I saw in an instant, by his look, something awkward had occurred, and exclaimed—

> Your look, my Thane, is as a book,
> In which men read strange matters.

The truth came out,—Milner, poor, talented Milner, in coming to the theatre, had fallen down ill, and was since dead; he had scarcely commenced the burlesque of "Za-ze-zi-zo-zu," therefore, as it was announced for that day week, unhappy I was doomed to do it. Think of that day week, very little of the scenery painted, and not twenty lines written; indeed, not a line, as I could not adopt poor Milner's, it was too painful, and I had the greatest respect for

Mr. Milner.

He had great genius, education, and talent, which he had for some time displayed, not only at Drury Lane, but at the Cobourg, under a variety of managements; he was an excellent dramatic writer, only a little too lengthy; he had many admirers, and numerous followers, and, when writing for the Surrey with all my success there, I have

often found it very difficult to contend against the ability of Milner at the rival establishment; for in those days, be it known, a more deadly hatred did not exist between the Capulets and the Montagues, than between the Surrey and the Cobourg. I confess, even now, that I rather advocate that sort of feeling, kept within proper bounds, inasmuch as like blows upon anvil, it wonderfully brings out the sparks of genius, that is to say, the good pieces; and decidedly the public have the advantage of it.

"Za-ze-zi-zo-zu," is written—it is a burlesque; It is, I apprehend, one amongst the *first* of the burlesques—burlesques which I *detest*, and always *shall*. It was only the great tact of Planché, and since of Mr. Brough, could have made me endure to witness them, or the great acting of Robson; I *hate* everything that tends to turn the profession, and the drama itself into ridicule; and it is only first-rate actors, and first-rate authors can be burlesqued, as the

sweetest wine becomes the sourest vinegar. *Za-ze-zi-zo-zu,* however, descended to no personalities; and I am quite modest enough to confess, displayed very little wit; it owed all its success to its peculiarities, its scenery, its music, and to its actors. Miss Romer played in it, Miss Murray, Miss Turpin, Miss Land, and a whole bevy of female beauty enough to have carried the hearts of the most stoney of audiences; added to them Thompson, and poor Bender, (lately dead) made *two* decided hits, the former as a head *cut off* with an indescribable laugh; and the latter something like a piebald tabby cat! The scenery also by Charles Marshall, the talented, produced a *novelle* effect ;(a city built of dominos, another of cards, and a railway, then, not only new to the stage, but to the world. A game at dominoes, was played by the characters as dominoes, in a most remarkable way, in fact, it was a very remarkable burlesque, and made a remarkable hit; nearly all the aristocracy came to see it, amongst

the rest her excellent and our then beloved Majesty QUEEN ADELAIDE. It was during the rehearsals of this burlesque that Osbaldiston, in an unusual fit of enthusiasm, unusual to a man of his philosophic temperament, always cold, determined to start off for Paris, (a determination he never fulfilled) to winess the performance of the "Za-ze-zi-zo-zu" there, and see if anything superior to our own ideas on the subject could be adopted; a custom pretty general with managers now-a-days, who, no doubt, as mere speculators, think it much wiser to purchase a drama for three francs, than to give the three hnndred pounds so lately suggested to them by the papers, for the finest *original* play that ever was written; and that is one simple reason for the honour of a country which styles itself great, why a theatre ought to be established in that country, where only original productions ought to be allowed. How else are men gifted, perhaps, as Sheridan Knowles, Bulwer, or many others of great genius,

blushing unseen, languishing under a cold sun, ever to add a literary lyric glory to their country? while on the other hand, we are sneered at by our continental, dramatic allies, who believe, and not unjustly, that we have no dramatists of our own; and think, even so meanly of our translaters as lately to have inserted into their plays, "the translation reserved." What *Punch* has to say on this subject, although so *laughable*, like the fools' songs to Lear, requires, by *somebody*, serious consideration. I speak this most disinterestedly, for such things can now matter little to me; I speak it for the literary credit of my country, and for the future advantage of rising original dramatists whose talent which I hope may, and I have no doubt will, shed its transcendent rays in a more palmy and balmy hemisphere than at present. Nothing would afford me, as an Englishman, greater pride and pleasure, though I might never trace a line for it, than to see before the yellow leaves of my chequered life drop off, a temple dedicated

solely to the pure effusions of national original talent. It is only what ought to be in justice to the inventive mental faculties of English authors, to the respectability of the country itself. Mr. Frederick Gye, perhaps, meditates something of this kind at his new Leviathan. There could not be a *better* man in the *right place.* With his great intellectual enduring, and enterprising mind, which I have seen develope itself from boyhood, I feel, from early experience with him, that he is *the man;* he who, from the mouldering ruins of the late theatre, (and he is the key stone of all) could build up in so astonishingly short a period, such a gigantic edifice as the new theatre in Covent Garden, is capable of anything, however great or grand; for my own part, when I went past it the other day, and seeing the pigmy-looking artificers 'mid air on the high scaffolds, I scarcely any longer wondered, during the construction of the tower of Babel, that they above forgot the language spoken be-

low. It took a king's entire reign, with all the children of Israel, as some assert, unsparingly employed, to pile up a pyramid. Covent Garden was rebuilt in the space of a few months. I do not apply this comparison to the size of the building, but to the vast difference in the time; a few months, for Covent Garden, perhaps, half a century for a pyramid; it is, I think, something to reflect on; and I leave it to the learned, and the antiquarian to decide, whether to a pyramid (being composed of four inclined planes) the erection of a scaffold was even *thought* of.

Previously to, and between these dramas of mine, many others by various authors were represented; one I perceive by

Captain Addison,

the author of "Tam o' Shanter," so popular at the other house, it was called "Sigismund Augustus," and first played for the benefit of the Polish Refugees; then we had Selby's "Robert Macaire,"

Zampa (for Collins,) and another piece the "Fate of War."

Miss Helen Faucit

also, made her *first* appearance in the "Hunchback," which, not a few persons thought Miss Fanny Kemble, the really great original, had made exclusively her own. With this impression on the public mind, and in the same theatre too, the undertaking of Miss Helen Faucit, was rather a formidable one; and she so young. Her acting of Julia, however, was a most exquisite performance; and no imitation of the original; everybody was charmed. She repeated the part many nights, with the same unequivocal success; and notwithstanding the shoals of Julias, and "Ladies of Lyons," which constantly float before my eyes in the various bills in various theatres, Miss Helen Faucit, as a great actress, is not to be out-rivalled; it is not the mere putting on the *fine* clothes, with her, it is the mental assumption of the

character she takes, in which she is so *fine;* the *getting rid* of *herself* to be *the* person she comes on the stage to represent; and that is the most difficult and artistic part of acting: then comes the detail—but I must not proceed thus, or my clever friend Stirling will think that I am going to set up for a teacher of acting, although, where his abilities are called in, I feel that I should have but little chance. What I mean by detail, however, is simply this: The feeling what the person *would* feel, that you represent; or doing what the person would do, that you represent; or *not* doing what the person could *not* do, according to the circumstances and position in education and life. This acquired, you are an actor, or an actress, *at once*, if you have the natural requisites, if not, like the old adage about the Blackamoor, your toil is hopeless. A man might as well attempt to sing without a voice. By way of making more distinct, the last observation of not

doing what the person represented could not have done, I'll give you an illustration.

I saw an actress, and a *very* talented one too, not long since, in the "Lady of Lyons," in the scene where she goes up into Claude's bed-room to pass the night, come forth in the morning, with a fine pair of long ribbon bracelets on. Now, the question is, where did she obtain those bracelets? she had neither coach, nor maid, nor box, nor even a cloak, for Claude is forced to cover her with his. It is not very likely they belonged to the poor old woman, Claude's mother, especially as they were *very fashionable* bracelets, supposing she might have worn them in her youth. It is not *very* likely the lady had brought them from Lyons in her pocket, (pockets were even then out of fashion,) or if she had done so in her abstraction and hurry to be off with a *prince*, would she, *could* she, under the disappointed state of her mortified feelings, have, for one moment in that position of

life, as I call it, thought of decorating her arms with a conspicuous pair of long Regent Street bracelets? Yet this lady was a capital actress, spoke the words well, and with great feeling. But that is not sufficient; there is an under side of character to be studied, the detail and consistency of position. I have heard of an actress, who played Lady Macbeth famously, having neither seen the tradgedy acted, nor even read it. I am inclined to think that Dr. Johnson somewhere relates this story; if so, she had most probably been taught by Garrick, and therefore did no more "than was set down for her." I think the formidable little manager, although, to be sure, he played Othello in a powdered bob wig himself, would have looked still more black, on opening the drapery, to have found his Desdemona decorated for strangulation, with a plume of ostrich feathers, which, having *somewhere* or *somehow* about her, she had slipt on behind the curtain, to *die* in.

Mrs. Faucit, the mother of Miss Helen

Faucit was, in my young time, a most excellent actress, and no doubt imparted much of her experienced skill to the mind of her daughter, which contained all the fertility of genius to nurture the germ so planted within it, and bring it, like a well-cultivated, well-trained flower, to its fullest blossom. Her Juliet, (Miss Faucit's,) was a splendid impersonation, and in a play, now seldom acted, I know not why, it is one of the most dramatic on the stage, "Venice Preserved," she was perfection. In Belvidera she brought back vividly to my mind its almost faded recollections of the great, the wonderful Miss O'Neil. Of course she never could have seen her, her mother perhaps, might have given her a few hints, if so, she caught them with the inspired fervour of a fine painter, who, if he cannot entirely bring forth the sublime tint of a Raphael, still produces a picture in itself transcendent.

To resume the thread of my discourse, it seems to me that I was taking greater

cognizance of what was going on in the enemies camp than my own; and what is a little surprising to myself is, that I kept a sort of diary of the passing events in Drury Lane, while of Covent Garden, where I was engaged, I absolutely kept none By the diary of my memory, therefore, I find that our forces in 1836 were greatly improved, inasmuch as we had at one time Charles Kemble, Macready, Vandenhoff, B. Webster, Farren, Mrs. Wm. West, Mrs. Glover, and Miss Helen Faucit With this, now *unenlistable*, troupe, Charles Kemble was taking (in a round of his favourite characters,) his final leave of the stage. Young and old alike pressed to see this brilliant light of the last century, ray by ray, go out. In succession came the "School for Scandal," "Charles Surface," "King John," "Falconbridge," "Julius Cæsar," "Marc Antony," as they will never be acted again, at all events, in my time. Only take the latter play, for instance—Brutus, Macready; Marc Antony,

Kemble; Julius Cæsar, Bennett; and Cassius, Vandenhoff. Every succeeding play, as it was acted, seemed to me like another nail knocked into the coffin of my early, as I must gratefully call him, *benefactor*. At length, on the 23rd of December, 1836, if my memorandum be correct, was the farewell benefit of

*Mr. Charles Kemble.**

I saw him on the stage in the morning, when he remarked to me in his usually bland manner, that he hoped he should play better that night than ever. His wish was realised. He did play better than ever I saw him. It was a wonderful performance. The play was "Much Ado about Nothing;" who will ever see such another Benedict?—such another Romeo? After the fall of the curtain, while the applause (I need scarcely say of a house crowded to the ceiling,) was ringing like a burst of terrific artillery, it speedily rose again, and there

* He played some time after by command of Her Majesty, but I had not then the heart to witness his performance.

stood Kemble, pale, but firm, surrounded by not only our company, but by every respectable member of the profession in London. Forest, the great American tragedian, was also there, with Bartley and Farley, and many members of the aristocracy, whose names I have now forgotten. Charles, thanking the public, almost choaked with grief, and the actors and audience alike melted into tears. He regretted, he said, that he had not selected a more serious play for so sad an occasion—it was serious enough as it was—he thanked them for half a century of indulgence bestowed on his poor merits—paused, dried his eyes, made an effort, then proceeded with something about good wishes—paused again, bowed, as he could bow, then down came the curtain, to not, I should say, one dry eye in that dense house. I went to him soon after, in his dressing-room. I murmured something. He thanked me very, very kindly, pressing my hand most warmly, thanked *me* for God

knows what. For, to esteem him as I sincerely and devotedly did, was no merit of mine, but *his*. As he was before the public the prince of actors, so he was in private life the very noblest of men.

It was about this period that "La Valière," by Sir Bulwer Lytton, was produced. It was a fine play, decidedly better written, I am of opinion, than either his "Lady of Lyons," or "Richelieu," excellent, and eminently more successful as they are. But some umbrage was taken at the cross, to which La Valière clings when the King comes to drag her from the convent; although, so vacillating are the public, within a short period after, in "La Favorite," at Drury Lane, where Miss Romer, who personated the heroine, had to die at the foot of the cross, the utmost approval prevailed.* "Valière is a tragedy

* It was during the rehearsals of this piece, Mr. Bunn, observing on the stage that the cross must be put on the other side, a *clever* member of the establishment, assisting in the direction, observed sagaciously that it was not painted on the *other side*.

of the highest conception and language, both of which, I scarcely need add, were done justice to by Mr. Macready and Miss Helen Faucit, who, every time she acted, continued to become a greater favorite.

I am greatly surprised, now, the prejudice respecting the appearance of a cross on the stage is judiciously exploded, that no manager has been struck with the idea of reproducing this splendid play, the more especially considering the great reputation acquired by "Richelieu," and the "Lady of Lyons;" the latter decidedly the favourite play of the modern stage. Mr. Macready now gave all his finest specimens of acting. "Virginius," of which he was *the Virginius*, and the singular and mysterious Werner, which, since that great actor's retirement, has never, to my recollection, been represented anywhere in any *theatre*, so entirely did he render it his own. Othello, his masterpiece, came in rotation and after that, another tragedy, "Straf-

ford," of which I shall speak more in its place.*

Mr. Macready.

Going one morning up Long Acre, on my way to the theatre, I was overtaken by Mr. Macready, of whom, I cannot tell why, except from the very humble opinion I had of myself, I always stood in a sort of awe. He was so confoundedly classic, I was always making some blunder in his presence. He was, however, very gracious, and paid me some very kind compliment on something of mine, which had been played the night before, and praise from my Lord Stanley is praise indeed. At length we approached a huge tall ladder, placed against a high scaffold, on the outside of which, without turning into the middle of the street, it was

* In the scene in "Othello," where the ambassador enjoins the black general to call back his fair wife, on the return of Desdemona, his saying—"There she is, sir, what do you want with her?" was a gem of acting whose brilliancy is not to be described. I have gone from my room in the theatre, into my box night after night, merely to witness that *morceau*.

not possible to pass. The Romans and the Greeks had their superstitions about flights of birds, peculiar birds, and so forth, and why might not I have my superstition with regard to passing under a ladder? To be sure, I could have alleged the Greek or Roman excuse, handed down to us by the Latin historians by way of mollifying the contempt of the great tragedian, at my not liking to pass under a ladder, which, as every one has heard, whether they attend to it or not, is unlucky. However, notwithstanding all these learned arguments, which passed rapidly through my mind, I could not muster up the courage to confess my weakness, and resolved, therefore, to dash manfully at my fate, as poor Don Quixote at the windmill, and combat the giant, come what might; when lo and behold, on reaching the ladder, it proved in reality like the sails of the mill to the knight of La Mancha, an imaginary Patagonian. Macready made a sudden pause, and after a moment of irresolution and re-

solution—"Mr. Fitzball," he said, "you will no doubt think it a great weakness, but I entertain an insurmountable dislike to pass under a ladder. It is a failing, if it be a failing, which I have imbibed from childhood; excuse me, therefore, if I go round!" and, suiting the action to the word, in the next instant he had glided past the outside, and you may be sure that I did not fail to imitate so *great* an example. I had frequently, very frequently, seen Macready's countenance on the stage distorted with passion, despair, death, and softened both by emotion and love, but I never saw it look so *human* as on that human occasion. And a very human and humane man is Mr. Macready. I believe, on one instance, when others, stout-hearted men, too, looked in silent horror on, he rushed into a burning house, saved the life of a perishing child, and restored it to the arms of its almost lifeless mother. And many were the reports that reached me of his private worth and goodness to others, through

a poor copyist of the theatre,—reports that Macready knew nothing of. How is it then, it might be asked, knowing Mr. Macready's amiable character, that you did not feel quite yourself in his presence. The fact is I was always timid and uncertain about the art I practised, of which Macready was the great magician. I felt as if, with one magic word, or one wave of his potent wand, he could have dissolved, like Prospero, my castles of air into the air of which they were created. I have often felt similar feelings under the influence of other minds, but feelings divested of far less veneration, more resembling what a boy feels, be he ever so much up in his task, when the head master goes round the school with his cane behind him. They say people of genius never are satisfied with their own works. I am sure, if that is a criterion, I must possess genius, for I never was nor shall be satisfied with mine. Going back to early recollections, that emotion seemed

to have formed itself in my heart when I went with my first piece to

Mr. Smith, (the Norwich manager.)

When I first went as a child author to Mr. Hindes, of Bury St. Edmunds, I knew no sensations of this kind; I saw in my mind's eye the effect only, not what was to lead to it; but there comes an age when the heart's ear opens to the creak of the ice beneath our feet, and the mind *hears* its peril. It may be that brave men endure no presentiments at the *outset* of a battle; yet, after more than thirty years study of human nature, I can scarcely bring myself to believe it; and what battle is so trying, or so *doubtful* as the battle of a nervous author? but to return a moment to Mr. Smith, I trembled beneath his managerial *smile*; the cold dignity in which he crowned himself—the cold dignity which most managers absolutely find it necessary to assume to ward off impertinence or familiarity, as they assume the tyrants on the stage. I *did not* understand it, and I suffered; I *do* not understand it,

and if displayed towards me, suffer still This Mr. Smith, as the reader has seen in my first volume, both accepted my piece, produced it, and played in it a part unworthy of his talent; for he was not only a manager but an *actor*; and although both actor and *manager* himself, did not, in those palmy days of the drama, always take the best parts, whether they suited him or not, and leave ten times better actors to enact the minor characters without the spangles too, as Tate Wilkinson used to say: still, with all these sterling good points, Mr. Smith, on the stage, and at every interview, successful as I proved, kept up this frozen barrier, through which no loophole allowed the heart to leap in. I'll tell you, for it is a matter of fine feeling how it was; and to prove to you what a piece of off-the-stage acting this managerial dignity amounts to, when real human nature thinks proper to assume its empire. Mr. Smith had a beautiful young daughter, highly accomplished also; he never intended her for the stage;

but at a very early age she became inspired with a love of acting, there was no resisting her inclination—it amounted to a passion. At length the father consented to her making an appearance in Norwich, at his own benefit. She played the then popular part so well chosen for her of Rebecca, in Sir Walter Scott's Ivanhoe; I, of course, was present, and never did I witness anything more charmingly sustained; her extreme youth, innocence, rendering the whole so pure and perfect; every heart responded in her favour with such general admiration and success, that she continued to play, alas! but for a very short period: she caught cold in dressing and undressing, I apprehend, and *died*. All eyes that had seen her act, I'm sure must have wept at the early fate of so exquisite a flower so untimely snapped in twain; but who could offer consolation to the poor heart-stricken father? who tread upon the sanctity of his anguish?—*I did*, in my sincerity, without quite understanding the delicate step I was taking. I wrote some

lines which the editor, Mr. Stevenson, did me the kindness to insert in the Norwich paper—they were to the memory of Miss Smith. I regret that the slightest recollection of them does not live in my mind, and I only revive the remembrance of their existence because they purchased for me at too cheap a rate the ever-after, and entire esteem and friendship of that excellent man, (Mr. Smith) who never in after years, came to the metropolis that he did not find my whereabouts, nor did I ever produce a piece that he did not act; and never again did I behold him clad in his mail of managership. Poetry is said by many, and wise men, too, to be a *curse* to its possessor. It may be so, but there *are* circumstances like the present, when a single drop of poetry poured into the poison cup of misery, changes it into a delicious honey, whose oblivious balm repays the renovated heart for long past years of misfortune, endurance, and regret.

Mr. Fitzharold.

As is my custom in my dramatic works to try and make my audience laugh with one eye, while they cry with the other, I will, before I continue my narrative, just relate a story as it was told to me of another member of the profession, stage-manager of the Norwich theatre, which happened not long before the event just related. Mr. Fitzharold, as he called himself, that not being his real name, had fallen overwhelmingly in love, and to cure himself of his malady, got married to a bewitching highland lassie wi' her twa bleu ee'n. For a brief period, during their honeymoon of gold, though of siller there seems to have been somewhat of a scarcity, these tender turtles dwelt as gude-man and wife, in a perfect paradise of mountain blisses, made up, of course, of ecstacies and kisses. At length, and what does not eventually become monotonous in this ugly old world, they began to find enough of each other's society as good as a feast; the young man wanted to go salmon

fishing amongst the lochs, in any loch, but *wedlock*, where he began to think he had been somewhat gudgeoned himself. Accordingly, he set out in spite of the somewhat sulky looks of Mrs. F., and remained so long on his excursions with the friends of bachelorism, Dick Bait and Bill Carp that when he returned, instead of finding his beloved Jessey, with open arms at the window, he discovered that she had gone, by way of consoling *herself* to a bagpipe dance, with an auld acquaintance, to the "Queen of Kilmarlock." Enraged, but not exasperated, the enduring husband sat himself down (he had caught nothing but a tartar) on a three legged stool—the stool of repentance, to chew, to him, the bitter, not sweet cud of matrimony. At length, fra the sweet Burn Side, arrived i' the canny morning, the lady and her auld (young) friend, and be it understood there were four ithers, lads and lasses, wi'un. Jealousy, nevertheless, that grim, green-eyed disturber of connubial happiness seemed to glide into the house at the

same moment. Mutual recriminations ensued, and, during the morning, they mutually agreed to make all up, by parting gude friends, and to hold the bond sure niver to see each ither mair. The young bridegroom puts spurs to his, (horse he had none) suppose we say to his boots, for the sake of being picturesque, and starts off for the Lord knows where: this part of our history, like the finest conceptions of our modern drama, is very much wrapt up in mystery; and, to borrow a leaf out of the same book, a space of years takes place between the acts.

Our scene now opens with the inside of the Theatre Royal, Ipswich. A fine handsome young man, with light auburn hair, bright blue eyes, and a figure such as Mars might envy, is getting up a new piece "The Wood Demon," in which he plays the guilty, but deeply interesting knight. Mrs. Faucit, lovely as she was, is Una; and who could possibly imagine this fine actor, and worldly-finished, Mr. Fitzharold, the pet of the pet-

ticoats, although he is married, to be no other than the absentee husband of our highland lassie of Act I. Yet, so it is; seven years have passed; he has become an actor—a most excellent one, and married again a most excellent wife, an actress, by name, her ambition never aspiring beyond the second chambermaids. Jealousy never entered her unsuspecting bosom; and when they whispered, as scandal can whisper behind the scenes, that her handsome husband was universally admired by the Belles in the boxes, she laughed under her shoulder of mutton sleeves, and only hoped it would be good for his benefit which was coming on.

We come now to a pair of *flats*. Presto! Mrs. Fitzharold's lodging. Mrs. F. is discovered, seated on a somewhat *littery* sofa, stitching spangles on a pink satin tunic, in which her handsome husband is, that evening, to astonish the natives in a new part. On a table before her are bills of the performances, an inkstand nearly empty, a number of quill pens, every one of which

would have written, perhaps, if it had been mended. Swords, rapiers, and tattered play-books, with a variety of what are called written-out parts, well thumbed, and King Lear's crown in a glass bookcase, nearly fill up the detail of the not extensive apartment. From a small tin Dutch oven, before the fire, issues a savoury odour, delicious to hungry stomachs, containing a rump steak, on which Mrs. F. frequently turns one watchful eye, for she is peculiar in turning her eyes two different ways at once, while with the other she matches and compares the spangles, as she attaches them to the rose-coloured satin. On the hob is a deep china jug, covered over with a small cymbal, the companion to which holds the remaining spangles. All these creature comforts are highly essential, and highly acceptable to the returner, at a late hour, from a long and tiresome last rehearsal, as I can well testify. The reader will, perhaps, have anticipated they are waiting for the gifted stage-manager of the Ipswich

Theatre Royal, who is momentarily expected to knock and ring.

A knock comes, but not a ring. 'Tis he, no doubt, *present*, but *absent* mentally, studying over Hardycanute. Mrs. F. starts up, though you would scarcely perceive it, she is so short and so fat, like dear, little Mrs. Liston, in "Dolla-Lolla," and Mrs. Liston always looked sitting when standing in the carriage. It is not he! A lady's voice is heard at the bottom of the somewhat narrow deal stairs, with the somewhat narrow, star-dotted, narrowest of narrow stair-carpets.

The inquiry is for *Mr.* Fitzharold.

He is not in from the *theater*. But the lady can walk up. Doubtless an order for tickets on the ensuing benefit night. Mrs. F. fusses about for a bill. "Love's Labour Lost," and the "Unwelcome Guest."

The lady enters. She is handsome and well attired. She inquires for Mr. Fitzharold.

"He has not yet returned from the re-

hearsal, Mum; but if you require tickets it's all the same: I am Mrs. Fitzharold!" At the same time drawing herself up with all the little dignity she possessed, to curtsy, as much as possible, like Mrs. Siddons in Lady Macbeth.

"Ye Mrs. Fitzharold," cried the unknown, in a somewhat contempuous scotch accent. "I'm sorry ye're na *batter* informed. Look at me. I pity ye fra my soul, for a' that; I am Mrs. Fitzharold."

Mrs. F. number one, was so astounded by the calm, sneering manner in which the stranger uttered these *withering* words, she would have fallen to the ground, but, by some providential interference, her hand, in catching hold of something whereby to sustain her, fell upon the handle of the china jug on the hob, and if she applied a portion of its contents to her lips, it only goes to prove how collected certain minds can be, though in a *little* body, under certain *great* emergencies. Then leaning her shoulder against the rim of the table, exactly its

height, she stood, like a martyr at the stake, silently awaiting her doom.

A long story is here told; a story of two wives and two weddings. It is Mrs. F. the first come to reclaim her faithless one, like Imogene of old, reversing the characters, and carrying him off as her spouse. She has become rich by a thumping legacy, and wishes to reclaim her wanderer, and make amends for the past. She has sought him long and vainly, but in consequence of his having fallen into Fitz, has never, till recently, been able to trace his fugitive steps.

What is to be done? There are two Juliets in the verandah—two female Richmonds in the field to-day instead of one!

These women, so mutually wronged, and by one man, *feel like women*, as women feel for each other. They resolve to die for each other. A bottle of laudanum is at hand, as it sometimes happens in the melodrames at the Victoria—no one knows how, which is the beauty of it. They embrace each other with tears in their eyes. Then

drinking each her portion of the oblivious antidote, lie down on the same little narrow black horse-hair sofa, to die in each other's arms.

Another knock, and this time a ring, succeeds. The hero of our pathetic story has returned. He is not in the best of tempers, grumbling at the maid, who grumbles at him in return. But the closed eyes of her that he expects to find, and her that he does not expect to find, hear him not. He enters the apartment, and, accustomed as he is to *startling* situations, he is a little surprised at finding his wife with her eyes closed and fast asleep on the sofa, locked in the embrace of another woman.

The smell of the laudanum leads, however, to a conviction of some appalling catastrophe. He rings up all the house, the doctor next door is called in, the stomach pump is put in request, if invented in those days, if not, the equally efficacious pump at the back door. They recover—Mrs. F. one, and, appalling to the senses

of the Hardicanute of the night, Mrs. F. two, from the heart of Mid Lothian. One weeps like Polly, the other reproaches like Lucy; he sings, like Macheath, "How happy could I be with either," drinks the rest of the contents, not of the laudanum bottle, but of the china jug, eats best part of the roast mutton, and marches back to the *theatre.*

Hardicanute, not being a Bluebeard, never dared to show his face in the domestic circle of his two wives again. Conscience quite overcame him, and the next morning he coached off on a shooting excursion to his friend Clark's, in Norfolk. In the meantime, under the sweet sympathy which mutual grief and mutual laudanum bring about, and a cup of strong tea, with something more *comfortable* than laudanum in it, these poor disconsolate ladies managed to console themselves for his infidelity and abrupt departure; and for years after, as Mrs. F. the first generously resolved to share her newly-acquired for-

tune with some one, she thought, next to herself, her double Mrs. F., the second, was the nearest akin, to share it with; and stranger than fiction though this truth may seem, they became inseperable friends, and absolutely resided together for the rest of their days. Nor have I heard, as it ought to have been, according to dramatic law, that the married Lothario either shot himself while in pursuit of the plump Norfolk partridges, or died inconsolable for the loss of *both* his wives.

Amongst the earliest of our novelties, this season, was a melodrame called the "Hindoo Robber," who, by the way, did not rob the public for a long time, for as the principal performers, two learned dogs, did not happen to be quite up in their parts on the first night, there was a great yelping, in the galleries in particular. At the end of the first act, one of the dogs, having been fired at, had to die on a rock, which he did, so admirably, that the applause filled the house from top to bottom; at

which the other dog, like too many professionals, became somewhat jealous of his friend, and rushed on the stage, to show how much better he could die, and died also. This might have passed off equally well, because, according to all rules of melodrame, it might have been supposed that, deeply affected by the loss of his companion, he had died of a broken heart. But, unfortunately, in his great effort to please the public, the poor fellow burst his skin, composed of webbing, spotted, to resemble a leopard,—the two dogs were the *leopards* of the Jumna,—and in so doing, out started an additional tail, so that the second *leopard* was endowed with the tail of a leopard and the tail of a dog also. The piece was proceeding with an intensity of interest, when this unlooked-for mistake occurred; and, I have no doubt, absurd as it may appear, but for the breaking of a needleful of thread, instead of the spontaneous combustion of laughter which ensued, the "Hindoo Robber" would have become

as popular as the "Caravan Driver and his Dog," of famous memory. Well may they say misfortune hangs on a thread. Every theatrical has heard the old story of the prompter, during the run of the *Caravan*, crying out that the play must be changed, as the *principal tragedian* was taken ill. "Good heavens! you inconsiderate block-head," cried the manager, with a long respiration, "how you alarmed me, I was afraid it was the *dog*. Bring me a strong tumbler of brandy and water."*

* Being on the subject of dogs, I must relate an anecdote of one told me by Mrs. Egerton. She said that some manager in the Isle of Wight being on a theatrical tour there, met with a servant going to shoot a dog, whose master, an officer, unfortunately for his dog, had been ordered unexpectedly abroad. The manager, being a humane man, and compassionating the fate of the poor condemned dumb animal, requested him as a gift, which request was readily acceded to, and the manager in his turn made him a present to a friend, who took him away accordingly, and became exceedingly attached to his new canine acquaintance. It so happened, however, after a considerable lapse of time, the new master of the dog died at Portsmouth, leaving the dog to the gentle mercy of his inconsolable widow, who speedily sent out poor Tray a second time to be shot. His old friend, the manager, of the Isle of Wight, happening, however, to arrive that very

Mr. Charles Dance

brought us an excellent new comedy called "The Country Squire," of which I need say little, as it still remains popular, as it at once became, before the public. Farren was the Country Squire, and a better representative could not have been found. I cannot understand why men so talented suddenly leave off writing. It cannot be that his pieces are no longer sought after by managers, I should think, because in his way there is nothing so good as to bear comparison with his productions. All the *darling babbies* and *Susan's young men*, and the gushing young ladies now in possession of some of our theatres, are not

morning at Portsmouth, again met Tray, who recognised him, and again saved his life.

Another anecdote on the heel of this may not be here ill-timed. After Mrs. Egerton's death, I wished to visit her grave in Chelsea churchyard. I wandered about the gravestone, but could not discover it. At length a little grey dog was running before me, till it stopped on the flat stone where slept the remains of my kind old Joan of Arc—her name nearly hid in weeds and grass. The do then *vanished*. On going away I inquired of the Sexton what had become of his dog. He thought it was mine; he had never seen it before.

worth the boot-tops of that fine old English gentleman, the Country Squire.*

Mr. William Farren, senr.

Farren was a fine actor—so natural: Lewis, Smith's treasurer, a very facetious and clever man, at Drury Lane, told me a droll story connected with Farren's acting one night at the Haymarket, in Grandfather Whitehead. Lewis was seated in the pit, when he heard two Yorkshire farmers, who had evidently come up to London to see the cattle show, but as equally bent on witnessing a little bit of theatrical show before their return. They were *(entre acte)* discussing the merits of Farren. "He's a *clever old* fellow that," observed the first. "Don't he hit off the *character* to a hair?" "Well, I don't exactly say that," replied the latter, "to my mind he has one *great*

* A sensible remark, on giving advice, of Charles Dance's, is worthy of record as it is of imitation. "I never offer advice where I don't feel it will be taken: it is throwing away an opinion to no purpose." This gentleman has since favoured the public with a new highly successful comedy at the Strand Theatre, called "Marriage a Lottery."

drawback, he's *too natral* loike, for play acting !"

Mr. Macready played Macbeth also excellently, as he played everything. But Edmund Kean's was better, and I think that Charles Young's was the best of all.* One night while Macready was enacting the Noble Thane, I happened to be seated in a private box with Sheridan Knowles, the greatest writer, as everybody must confess, since old Shakspeare. It was at the scene

* A lady, (a Miss Baily,) once gave me the link of a chain, which, she assured me, was *actually* said to be a link of Macbeth's armour, given to her by some Scottish nobleman. I did not exactly give credence to the identity of this link, nor do I think the lady placed implicit faith in it herself. It had the appearance of a flat ring of bronze, and nothing more. But judge of my surprise, on examining this apparent ring of bronze, *with a microscope*, on finding that it was silver, richly gilt, resembling a serpent with its tail in its mouth !—the eyes, mouth, and every scale exquisitely wrought. Thence, it follows, whosoever's armour it formed a portion of, could have been no ordinary man. *If* Macbeth's, then the armour in which he fell was *chain* armour. What an authority here for a costumier, or the programme of a Shaksperian play bill. My intention was to have had this extraordinary link set in a ring; but either I laid it *too carefully* by, or some *friend* to whom I offered it for inspection *borrowed* it, as books are not unfrequently *borrowed* from the British Museum.

where Macbeth enters the cavern to consult the weird sisters before the diabolical cauldron. It might be, perhaps, that the pernicious *spirits* were in the *ascendant*, *below*, and that the demon master-carpenter, under their refractory influence, did not at first, like Caliban, willingly obey the witch's bidding, till feeling additional cramps and pains for his disobedience, he sent up the baby image of a king with such a spasmodic jerk, that the poor grim little spectre's gilt crown flew off, showing a very palpable pasteboard lining. In this dilemma, M'Ion, third witch, with great presence of mind, and great adroitness, assuming the air of a conjuror who aims at being thought perfectly necromantic, took up the shadowy diadem and performed a solemn coronation on the royal spectre, as if it were merely putting on the lid of a teapot. The audience did not laugh, which showed the great control held over them by Macready, who went on with all the majesty of Scotland in his looks.

Knowles turned round with a comic smile, and whispered—"I can imagine Macready's feelings at this moment, although his dignity never deserts him, even under a scene so ludicrous." But Macready's dignity was more potent than that, for it seemed to cast a spell over his audience: no one dared to smile, much more to laugh.

It appears to me that I have slipped over the production of "Thalaba the Destroyer," from Southey's poem, nor should I have recurred to it but for the peculiarity of the circumstances attending it being very amusing. Osbaldiston came over the Bridge of *Sighs*, as I now called the hanging bridge at the back of the flies, his face was again as the book printed in blue, in which men read strange matters. I read them quickly. Things were dull, expenses heavy — he wanted superior strength to his company, Macready, Vandenhoff, Farren, Webster, H. Wallack, Mrs. Glover, Helen Faucit. He had *luckily*, he said, engaged *superior* strength.

I listened with amazement for the disclosure. Had the elder Kean come back again?—was Miss O'Neil about to return to the boards? My intense curiosity, however, was not to remain on the stretch long. He told me, with a gust of satisfaction, that he had engaged the Burmah bulls, elephants, ostriches, I think, and heaven knows what besides, from the Surrey Zoological Gardens, with the Burmese carriage, in which Miss Vincent was to ride as Thalaba the Destroyer, holding in her hand, out of the window, the *burning sword*. I had written a piece on that subject years before for the Cobourg, in which Mr. Huntley, the stage manager of that theatre, hobbling with *gout*, hobbled the young and *alert* Thalaba. I saw my doom; I offered no resistance, and availing myself of the old drama, the parts were speedily ready for the new performers, who, whatever they needed in other requisites, were full of *animal* spirit, one of the greatest essentials for the stage. So eager to make their de*but* were the bulls,

that they *butted* down the doors of the stable, P.S., and let out the elephants, just at the very moment when Kawla, the Enchantress, poor Mrs. West, (who, though she wore a fine crown, studded all over with the stars of night, was *ungrateful* enough to express her exceeding dislike to this part,) surrounded by all the genii, male and female, was listening, with very abstracted attention to an *infernal* chorus, under the roots of the ocean—two hundred of us, I amongst the rest, not as one of the identical infernals, only as an infernal author, were assembled on the stage, when, whether it was that the stage-struck quadrupeds thought they were in duty bound to join in a *roaring*, chorus so akin to their own, I know not, but in an instant they rushed forth in a body, roaring like thunder—the chorus in the "Huguenots," "Traviata," and the "Trovatore," were a whisper to it, and this with powerful horn accompaniments. The confusion which ensued—yelling, shrieking, running, may be best imagined;

everybody took to his or her heels, helter skelter, and without precedence. Luckily there was an immense stone staircase at hand, up which, in less time than it has taken to record this fact, we had all ensconsed ourselves, leaving the entire possession of the stage to our new allies. As for the enchantress, *Kawla*, when the rehearsal commenced, the call-boy did *call her* long in vain. Yet, after all, these elephants were very docile; they were very young, and played with each other like kittens. In ascending the stairs to enter the theatre, it was curious to see them cautiously try every step gently with their feet to ascertain whether it possessed sufficient strength to sustain their weight. Their likes and dislikes, too, are very remarkable: An old elephant some years ago, I was told by Mrs. Egerton, in a procession in "Blue Beard," could not be induced to advance toward the footlights, till Mrs. Parker, a celebrated columbine, playfully taking hold of its ear, said "Come along, Chucky, let you and I

walk together." Singular to say, the docile animal immediately suffered her to lead it round the stage, which she did the whole run of the popular melodrame.

Another circumstance was inexplicable to me, although of a much simpler nature. I produced in the early part of this season, the translation of a French vaudeville, handed over to me by Osbaldiston himself, called "*Mutual Expense*," which neither Mr. Ben. Webster, nor Mrs. Glover, with all their talent, could *lead* by the *ear*, although they both did their very best. The audience, or a clique, disapproved it from the beginning; I must think it a clique of some sort, because, if the piece had been an indifferent one, Webster and Mrs. Glover were both too good judges to have played in it. However, so it was—it was a decided d——nation.

T. P. Cooke.

My old friend, T. P. Cooke, joined us with his unrivalled performance, in Douglas Jerrold's interesting, and always money-bringing nautical drama of "Black Eyed

Susan," founded on Gay's immortal poem; it charmed everybody here, as it had done everywhere else. He also enacted Tom Coffin, in the "Pilot," with equal success; I know not from what cause, but a serious altercation took place just about this period, between Osbaldiston and Harry Wallack, the stage manager; and to such an extreme did the former carry his resentment, that he gave orders Wallack should be refused admission at the stage door, although his name was inserted to play, in the bills of the evening. Wallack, however, who was anything but deficient in courage, came at night to the theatre, dressed for his part; and when the substitute was about to make his entrance, pushed boldly past him, and played Dentatus in spite of the manager himself, who, though exceedingly provoked, could not help laughing at the singularity of the circumstance. Osbaldiston seems here to have grown very quarrelsome; we had a star in the person of a gentleman named Otway, who performed remarkably well the character

of "Hamlet," and looked it to perfection. What Osbaldiston found to dispute with Mr. Otway about, I am at a loss to guess; I never encountered a more polite or affable gentleman. Then we had a Mr. Hamblin, from America, also in Hamlet, and Coriolanus, a sterling, good actor; and a succession of stars, shining one after the other, (I cannot recognise dates.) I was passing through the hall, then in Hart Street, into the theatre, when a stranger followed me mysteriously ejaculating into my ear, what seemed an anxious admonition, the single monosylable *hide!* Having no apprehension of a sheriff's officer, and assasinations being in those days a thing of rare occurrence in England, I naturally enquired what I was to hide for? The gentleman himself smiled, and informed me that his name was *Hide;* that he had come to rehearsal in Shylock, and, as he was unknown to the hall porter, (my tall old friend of early mention) he wished me merely to pass him into the theatre. I believe his

acting was good, but the house unluckily bad; he gained no disapproval, but, perhaps, disappointed or offended, he disappeared quickly after the fall of the curtain, and was gone, when absolutely called for by the select few. An interval succeeded; renewed calls, when, at last, Webster presented himself, observing with great gravity—"ladies and gentlemen, I have been to *seek Mr. Hide* in all parts of the house, and he is nowhere to be *found*." A convulsion of mirth ensued, and every one was satisfied with so facetious an explanation.

A new melodrame had been written for T. P. Cooke, called "False Colours," it was more interesting than nautical; I quite forget now what it was about. Cooke did not fancy the part, and our "False Colours" were speedily, therefore, hauled down. The only good thing in the performance, which lives in my recollection, was the sinking of a ship in the centre of the stage, much more natural than the big ship in the Pilot at the Adelphi, which threw all London into

a state of excitement. It was during the rehearsal of this drama, in consequence of H. Wallack having quitted the managership, that Osbaldiston desired me to find another gentleman to supply his place. It was not my business to do so, but I immediately suggested to him Mr. Ben. Webster, as the most capable person in the company. Accordingly, I was deputed to conduct that worthy son of Momus to his new appointment, which, be sure I did quickly; and it was well it was done quickly, for he soon proved himself to be one of the most valuable of stage-managers. A new tragedy was produced for Mr. Macready's benefit, called "Strafford," in which the great tragedian, of course, played Strafford. It was uncommonly well received, and I afterwards took it for my own benefit; I had two benefits during my engagement at Covent Garden, on which occasions, the greatest singer of her time, and probably of any other time sang for me, namely, Madame Grisi, as also did my friend Balfe, and that excellent vocalist of vocalists, Ivanhoffe. I

afterwards had another very profitable benefit at Covent Garden, on which occasion the Siege of Rochelle was produced, first time at that theatre, and Balfe, Giubeli, Templeton, and Madame Balfe, sang for me gratis. It was on this occasion that Mr. Maddox, manager of the Princess's Theatre, was so very generous, as absolutely to change his bill of his week's performance in order to lend me a lady and gentleman or two to fill up my cast in the opera. I simply record this to prove to those ladies and gentlemen that I have not outlived gratitude, and also to say something about a lady so popular, so talented, and so generous as—

Lola Montez.

In making what is called a benefit, people who are unsophisticated in theatrical affairs, should know that every one is anxious to secure everything like attraction within his grasp, especially in a theatre where the expenses are, sometimes, from two to three hundred pounds. Benefit had followed be-

nefit; at both houses every novelty had been resorted to; nothing new was left to me. This benefit, which I fully expected would prove to me a decided loss, annoyed me sadly; I was sauntering up Regent Street when I met Stretton, the popular singer, whose benefit was just coming off, he assured me that he had secured every attraction worthy of the public, and that there was no hope left for me, unless, indeed, he added satirically, turning back, you could secure the Lola Montez.

"The Lola Montez," reiterated I, "pray what is *that?*" in my ignorance, not knowing.

"Lola Montez is a lady who appeared the other night, at Her Majesty's Theatre, the Opera in the Haymarket, a dancer, but owing to some aristocratic disturbance, has quitted the place in disgust; the papers were full of it; I have been and offered her fifty pounds to dance for me, and met with a decided refusal, so, as I observed just now, I see no hope for *you*."

This ended our conversation, except my enquiring the address of the beautiful, enraged Lola Montez, which, having obtained, I repaired at once to her apartments, and simply by sending up my card, was graciously admitted. She was sitting for her portrait, a charming likeness, but far less charming than the original.

I explained my errand, and was at once, as Stretton had foretold, left without hope. It was, perhaps, that a look of disappointment, if not something of distress crossed my features, but in an instant, her look changed; her voice also. "I will, however," she continued, blandly, "ask my mamma," I think she said mamma, "what she thinks of it; give me your address, I will write to you!" I thanked her very cordially; made my bow, and my exit, carrying with me to the theatre, very little anticipation of a good result. I was occupied at the rehearsal of the opera, two hours, perhaps; Balfe, and his sensitive and gifted wife, were there, and pressed me strongly to dinner;

but as I never in my life absented myself from my own dinner table at home, without specifying the same, being a very punctual man, I knew my remaining out would cause great anxiety; therefore, home I went. Judge of my surprise on entering the drawing room, at finding Madame Lola Montez, seated on the sofa, chatting with my wife, as familiarly as if they had known each other for years. She had already made up her mind to dance for me! When I mentioned terms, she refused to hear me, and in fact, intended, and did dance for me for *nothing*. When the announcement appeared, everybody was astonished, and everybody was calculating the enormous amount of the sum I had consented to give for the attraction; and a great attraction it proved; the theatre was crammed. After all, my hopeless benefit proved the best of the season; and the usual remark was made, a remark invariably applied to any success of mine, that, from down right good luck, I had as usual alighted on my feet.

Lola Montez arrived on the evening, in a splendid carriage, accompanied by her maid, and without the slightest affectation, entered the dressing room prepared for her reception. When she was dressed to appear on the stage, she sent for me, to enquire whether I thought the costume she had chozen for the occasion would be approved of by my friends. I have seen sylphs appear, and female forms of the most dazzling beauty, in ballets and fairy dramas, but the most dazzling and perfect form I ever did gaze upon, was Lola Montez, in her splendid white and gold attire, studded with diamonds, that night. Her bounding before the public, was the signal of general applause and general admiration of her beauty—and general admiration of her dancing, which was quite unlike anything the public had ever seen; so original, so flexible, so graceful, so indescribable. At the conclusion of her performance, I need scarcely add, how raptuous and universal was the call for her re-appearance; after

which, when I advanced with delighted thanks, again holding up her hand, in graceful remonstrance, she refused to hear me, and in half-an-hour, in the same carriage, had quitted the theatre; from that time I have never again had the exceeding pleasure of seeing the *generous*, the beautiful Madame Lola Montez.* On that same occasion, Mrs. Gratton was to have sung for me "*The Cross* Old Bachelor," a popular song, of my own writing, at the time, but did not arrive, from some accident, till the curtain was down. The malcontents kicked up a bit of a row in the upper gallery; I was seated in the green room, waiting for the coach, to go home, when Balfe hurried in, "Do you hear that?" enquired he, quite surprised at *my* philosophy: I, generally so nervous, "Certainly!" "But, my dear *Fitzy*," the familiar appellation by which he generally

* Singular as are the various reports respecting her, which have reached us in different papers, to me, at least, as I have here set down, and everyone must allow it, she was all thatwas generous, ladylike, and gentle.

addressed me, "they'll break the chandelier." "That's the affair of the managers, my dear *Balfy*," I replied, "I took the theatre for *last night*, it's now *to-morrow morning*." I should have been very sorry, nevertheless, with all my pretended stoicism, had any accident happened to the magnificent chandelier, and to prevent such a result, ordered the gas to be turned off, which soon set my friends, the gods, scampering, lest they should have to grope their way out of the attic regions, in darkness. At that moment, poor Mrs. Grattan arrived; having had to play in the last piece at the Princess's, she could not possibly have escaped sooner; and the good-natured soul burst into tears at the disappointment, no less to herself than to me, and I had the greatest difficulty to console her.

On the subject of tragedies, the most successful and eminently deservedly so, of late years, was the "Ion" of Sergeant Talfourd, afterwards Sir W. Talfourd; although highly classic, it was neither marble-like enough to

be cold, nor was it at all heavy, which are generally the defects of works of this description; the chiselling is mostly rendered so fine as to lose sight of the chiselling of nature. "Ion," in my opinion, is a model painting, for classic dramatists to imitate. They generally write as if the Greeks and Romans of other days were stiff, passionless, and bloodless, as the statues which represent them. This is not the case with "Ion," which was a beautiful and interesting specimen of life, as doubtless it passed in the days of Ion's existence. This play became very fashionable, "Seated in my chamber there," how frequently did I hear, with sincere gratification, the unceasing rattle of the numerous carriages, bringing aristocrat after aristocrat, to witness the triumph of the great, the good, the learned Serjeant Talfourd. It was just such a powerful and *human* pen as Talfourd's, which *might* have restored Melpomene to her throne.

Tragedy, however, has never long at a

time been the fashion in this country—except at intervals, where such great spirits started up, as Garrick, John Kemble, Mrs. Siddons, the Miss O'Neil, the elder Kean, and to do him justice of late years, the *younger* Kean; even the talent of the immortal Johnson, could not render tragedy popular. So convinced, however, was the learned doctor, of his gigantic ability to do the state good service, that he sat confidently in a front stage box, with a scarlet gold-laced waistcoat on, to witness the result. "Irene" proved a failure, with the public, notwithstanding all the knowledge of the classic leviathan. Dramatic knowledge is unteachable. Speaking of Johnson, I was one day dining at a friend's, and happening to sit near an aged gentleman, of the name of Bowden, some one made a quotation from Rasselas! "Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Bowden, "the last time I saw the doctor, (meaning Doctor Johnson,) he was leaning against a post in Fleet Street, his wig in his hand, wiping the perspiration from his face, with his

handkerchief." I could not avoid staring with surprise at a man who had seen Doctor Johnson! It seemed to me as astonishing as saying he had seen King Cheops walking about in one of the pyramids; and yet, after all, my own mother, when she was a girl, had seen, and been in the society of Doctor Goldsmith, at Sir Charles Bunbury's, at Barton Hall.

During the season, we also re-produced "Esmeralda," as an opera, selecting the music, principally from Weber's "Preciosa," for Collins, who played Phœbus, and Miss Romer as Esmeralda. Collins played and sang excellently, but Miss Romer created quite a sensation. Her entrance, attended by the gipsies, dancing, with innumerable numbers of coins, glittering and jingling on their wide flowing skirts,* under a canopy of tapestry of all colours, was one of the most picturesque, peculiar effects I ever

* So picturesque were those groups, that the late Duchess of St. Alban's frequently engaged them to dance at her mansion, for the amusement of her guests.

remember to have seen represented on the stage. Ransford, in his Bohemian costume, and with his fine manly voice, contributed greatly to the effect of this performance. On the termination of the opera, Miss Romer, in particular, having been unanimously called for, amongst a great number of bouquets thrown at her feet, a bunch of beautiful fresh roses was mingled, which, seeing in her hand, as I was thanking her for the great service she had rendered me, by her splendid exertions, I could not resist my admiration of the roses, also. "Take them," she said, "they belong to you." I did not take them as belonging to *me*, but I took them out of the admiration I felt for a mind so refined and poetical, as to offer such a disclaiming, modest, and beautiful compliment.

Notwithstanding all that I have said respecting the non-attraction, generally, of tragedy, merely to show how weak is human nature; I had, myself, the vanity to write, and the audacity to produce a tragedy also,

called "Walter Tyrrel, the man who shot Rufus with the arrow;" Mr. Vandenhoff was to enact Walter, and Miss H. Faucit was obliging enough to enact the Heroine; then we had Webster, and Miss Vincent in the under current. It was read, and I owe it to myself to say, greatly approved in the green room; the rehearsals went swimmingly on, when one morning, like Dickens' story about the sandwiches, and no mouth to put them in, we had "Walter Tyrrel," and no "Walter Tyrrel" to put into the part; Vandenhoff had left the theatre, and sailed, I believe, for America, justly disgusted with Osbaldiston, for placing him in a half-price piece. I felt very much humiliated by this circumstance, and thought, by way of self-torment, he had been frightened away by my scarecrow tragedy; and that, because I was not Sheridan Knowles, he did not care to play for me. It was exactly the reverse, as I afterwards discovered; a more kindly intention was never felt in my behalf, than that of Vandenhoff; I ought

to have known it by the approval which he expressed of my piece, and absolutely told me, also, that his gifted daughter, Miss Vandenhoff, herself a dramatist and poetess, had highly commended my *language*, for which gift, *hacknied* in the service of managers, I was not greatly in the habit of receiving the highest compliments; it was therefore a proud feeling for me to see a sentence of mine underlined for its merit, by the pencil of Miss Vandenhoff,

"Where Misery braids her hair with threads of gold."

To repair the loss of Mr. Vandenhoff, we were fortunate enough to find an able substitute in

Mr. Elton.

Mr. Elton set about his task with all the intensity and ardour of a man resolved honestly to do his duty to the letter, no matter who the author was, Shakspeare or Fitzball. Miss Helen Faucit, as zealously imitated his example—not that her willingness required an example—Webster and Miss Vincent, too, though in the rear, were

not behind in zeal, good intention, and with some of Charles Marshall's most beautiful scenery, my *tragedy* had an excellent reception, the performers being all called for before the curtain. In those days, it was not the fashion to call for the author; and indeed, I think it much better "in the breach than the observance;" authors, like violets, are best under the leaves. Of Elton's acting in this, and many other much more important pieces, it would require more space than I have to spare in these pages, to do him ample justice. He was a pure actor, with a most expressive eye, not unlike the elder Kean's, and not unlike Charles Young in his acting; always perfect, always in earnest; a small man, with a most telling and mellifluent voice; and off the stage, a most exemplary character. He was lost, sad to say, on his passage from Dublin, where he had been to fulfil an engagement, as a star, and his body, like that of poor Power, never found.

Sheridan Knowles.

Dear, excellent, inspired Sheridan Knowles, our modern Shakspere, brought us an original drama, called "Brian Borohume," which ran with general approval to the end of the season; the Hecuba to which we had come at last. A fine speech was made about successful pieces, and successful authors, never in the slightest degree referring to me with my hod of mortar, the drudge and stopgap of many a highsounding *failure*, when salaries could not else have been paid. I see, by remarks in my diary, that my feelings were *greatly hurt* by this injustice. It would have been ridiculous to drag the under current of my life before the public; but, at all events, my tragedy of Walter Tyrrel, if not the most successful play of the season, was an originality, and *one* of the most successful and *attractive;* and, when transplanted into a last piece, the houses fell down to so low an ebb, at the first price, that the manager had no alternative but to restore Walter Tyrrel to the head of the

bill. A sort of practical compliment, too well understood by *all* managers, especially on a *Saturday*, when the *treasurer* is the critic, who, with true mathematical skill, by the application of figures, dissolves the most glittering bubbles into truisms, bringing into his commentary, that somewhat matter-of-fact quotation—

"Those who please to live, must live to please."

And, although far be it from me, not to estimate perfection, still where perfection cannot be sustained, like the gold without the alloy, then, I do say, that the alloy, without which your gold would fall into dust, is as essentially worthy of commendation, and a word of appreciation, as your *gold itself.*

It is hardly worth while for me to go into a recapitulation of this term of management under Mr. Osbaldiston, who, in consequence of having realised a large sum of money, by what is called a *minor* drama, "Jonathan Bradford," fully determined, I believe, to invest himself with a theatre royal,

and try the effect of a *larger* minor drama in a larger theatre. A theatre royal, I have frequently heard the case argued by men speculative as Osbaldiston was, but he was the *first* to try the experiment. It *did* answer the first season; he cleared two thousand pounds: the second season, Osbaldiston lost himself, in listening to every one's opinion, without abiding by his own good common sense. The yelping cry of legitimacy haunted him wherever he went; till, like the knight in the fairy tale, the cotton of self-control not being stuffed into his ears, he became terrified at the Gorgon sound of his own voice, and in the querulous nervousness of his heart, began to chime in with the cry of legitimacy himself. Well, we *had* what is called legitimacy; we had the very *best* authors and actors that could be engaged. In referring to the management of Osbaldiston, writers and speakers have always lost sight of this important fact: we had Charles Kemble, Macready, Vandenhoff, Elton, Farren, Power, Collins,

H. Wallack, Tilbury, Webster, Mrs. West, Miss Helen Faucit, Miss Romer, Miss Turpin, Miss Taylor, and a whole phalanx of others nearly as good. Yet, the second season, startling as the disclosure may appear, we lost the two thousand pounds we made the season before! How is this to be accounted for?* Added to which, the very reviewers who had abused our illegitimacy, turned round and abused our legitimacy still more. So, like the man and his ass, if a manager attempt to please everybody, he will please nobody. The bugbear about the legitimate drama, is a rockstaff, and a piece of ignorant cant. Everything dramatic, that is *moral*, interesting, and *amusing to the public, is* the legitimate drama, whether it be illuminated with blue fire, or in one act, or in twenty. What did Knowles say to me once on this very subject? I was rehearsing

* On rational calculation, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the great outlay for all these heavy increased salaries was considerably more than the reduced prices of the theatre could afford; and, as those salaries were not incurred during the first season, Cocker's services are not required to prove the result.

for Madame Vestris, my serio ballet of "Hans of Iceland," when I saw Knowles standing at the P.S., lost in contemplating the scene, and rivetted, as it were, to the interest of the action going on; for, understand, there was not a word spoken. I met Knowles the next morning, in Cranbourne Alley, when I enquired what he had found to interest him so in our rehearsal? "Everything, my boy," was his reply—the very spirit of the drama. Action that speaks and appeals to the heart, as forcibly, if not more so, than the finest speech. Then he was pleased to pay me a very great compliment, which, coming from so great a man, I may be justified in speaking of, especially since it leads to a new conclusion.

"You are very indulgent, and can afford to be so," was my reply, "to a mere writer of melodrame."

"Melodrame!" reiterated the poet, "and pray what is *Macbeth* but melodrame? and *Richard the Third*, and Shakspere's plays in general, if you come to that? melodrame."

Here was a conviction! Shakspere, then, is *not* the *legitimate* drama. Many's the time I've wondered in my own mind, how Messrs. Phelps and Greenwood contrived to push Shakspere, year after year, down the throats of the Sadlers Wellsers, (setting aside the *fine* acting of the former), and C. Kean, season after season, with the "Winter's Tale," "Hamlet," and "King Lear;" to be sure, Kean lards them over, finely, beautifully; and, as I am, in heart a great champion of all that sort of thing, I may be excused for relating here, what I once heard a great legitimist say on that subject. "It seems to me," said he, "as if the actors at the Princess's all played *behind* the scenes, instead of before them, as in John's time formerly. We see little there now; but the scenes, which are continually on the move, like magic lantern." He was one of the *oldest* legitimists of all; and liked better, scenes that rounded up, when you saw the good admonitory rope at each end, passing under the ponderous rollers. Grieves, Telbin,

James, Fenton, Marshall, and William Beverley, have something to answer for, to the ghosts of departed scene carpenters, especially such as died in the *legitimate odour* of ropes and rollers.

But turning back a leaf to Knowles. If, then, Shakspeare be not this long cried-for, croaked-for, printed-for, blustered-for, legitimate drama—what *is* the legitimate drama? It seems to me, this: a new manager starts a new management; he is a stranger to London, but has, for years, managed the Theatre Royal Plumpton Marsh, where the gas is not yet laid on. He has read with great intensity, for years, the "Figaroes," the "Theatrical Dampers," the "Scene Shifter's Album," the "Legitimate Admonitor," the "Musical Invincible," and laughed, till his sides ached, as they have, in the most powerful language, elicited the stupid mistake of actors, authors, composers, singers, and, in short, the *great mistake* of everything theatrical in London. Above all, deploring with a

pathos quite heartrending to the self-applauding manager of Plumpton Marsh, the great decline of the *legitimate drama*, the proper restoration of which would confer the glory of martyrdom on a classical and spirited manager, who had the taste, genius, wit, and courage to undertake the Herculean task.

Mr. Plumpton Marsh.

Plumpton Marsh, the worshipped idol of his constantly paid little community of actors—in his estimation the actors of the *world*—Plumpton Marsh, at length, having saved a few hundreds, by wandering from place to place, and puffing himself off in *large letters* at the head of his bills, as *the* Belphegor, or *the* Virginius, or *the Mag*beth—*Mag*, according to his pronunciation, ever since he heard of such a word being discovered, cut on a stone amongst the ruins of Macbeth's castle—Plumpton comes to the desperate resolution, a theatre being to let in town, to take it, bring *his* company—*the* company—with him also, and with them

in particular, Mr. Spitgiggings, his treasurer. Then, by adopting all that the shrewd editors of the "Scene Shifter's Album," &c., &c., &c., so archly, and so wisely suggested, the whole press in his favour, to clap the whole crew, Smith, Buckstone, Webster, Creswick Sheppard, and Phelps, under hatches, and restore the legitimate drama to a *grateful* British world. Accordingly, he arrives in London. Money, which is to be returned, like gold shovelled out of the diggings, in tenfold nuggets, flows profusely. Out comes the vast announcement: Theatre *Royal.*—*Mag*beth, Mr. Plumpton Marsh; Lady *Mag*beth, Mrs. Plumpton Marsh. House, (orders included,) astounding. Mr. and Mrs. P., nobody else, called on at the end of *every* act! This looks well: Mr. Spitgiggings, the treasurer, rubs his hands, and twinkles his right eye, he has no left—he would have twinkled both, but, unfortunately, the larger of the two, was knocked out four years ago, by Mr. Plumpton Marsh,

when, in Richard, carried by enthusiasm, he energetically threw away the truncheon, and knocked out the poor treasurer's left orb. The second night comes, the unfailing "Lady of Lyons." Claude Melnotte, Mr. P.; Lady of Lyons, Mrs. P. House well papered, but badly *gilt*—calls similar. The papers, however, especially that sneering *Times*, cold, and drawing comparisons: Mr. P. lacks the merit of Macready, Mrs. P. would surpass Helen Faucit, if the other lady had not, so prematurely, appeared before her arrival in town. Comparisons are odious, and an account of a sinking treasury, or rather no treasury at all, more odious still. Mr. P. now recollects himself, that he has neglected to, personally, consult the *oracles*, whose sage advice and opinions of the decayed state of the stage, for want of a genius enterprising and sapient enough to restore it, had inspired him to an enterprise, the first step in which, striding boldly over the heads of ignorant and unqualified managers, was to

secure him the *rushing* attendance of the *grateful* million. Mr. P. now purchased a quire of the finest satin gilt-edged, watered, *moire-antique*, and Spitgiggings is deputed to pen a balmy note to three of the most powerfully-writing editors, inviting them to a little *déjeûner*. They, those awfully great men, all legitimists, condescendingly sacrifice their time, as martyrs, ready to expire in a legitimate cause, and confidentially accept the invitation—not altogether, but separately. Each was charmed with Mr. P., but with Mrs. P. no language could pourtray the delighted feeling they could not express, especially as the cold chicken is being washed down their august throats with iced champagne. At length, to come to business: Terence Beak, has condescendingly brought with him a legitimate tragedy, "Pope Pius," to be played without scenery. Mr. Neverlaugh presents him with a screaming farce, called "A Cold Reception," entirely divested of frivolous play upon words, or vulgar practical jokes,

till, at the conclusion, the comic man falls into a horsepond, off the stage, according to the strict rules of the classic drama. Mr. Sheridan Bowles has a comedy for which he only expects, (happy is the man, &c.,) £300 sterling. *This* comedy is all to be played seated *à-la-Moliere*, and glorifies itself with the cheering title of the "Paralytic Stroke." Poor P. is not so last but he begins, like poor George Barnwell, wise, alas! too late, to grow apprehensive of the legitimate, since this is pronounced to be its ultimatum—*his* only hope. But the frowning and haughty Mr. Terence Beak is a writer of the *Scourge;* Mr. Neverlaugh is on the *Eternal Smasher;* Mr. Sheridan Bowles edits the *Porcupine.* Mr. P., who has an excellent *money-bringing* drama by Perkins Popular, is ashamed to confess it, much more to produce it, and terrified into compliance by the dreaded castigations of the annihilating *Scourge*, *Smasher*, and *Porcupine*, he plays the first

two of their immaculate inspirations, which, notwithstanding the heading of the bill in large *red*, un*read* letters—*Restoration of the Legitimate Drama*, are received thinly and coldly by discriminating but *select* audiences. But although his last *stroke*, the "Paralytic Stroke," is underlined, and places *kindly* advised to be taken early, from the apprehension of not obtaining any, luckless P.. fortunately at all events for himself, this time escapes the paralytic stroke by the timely stroke of a writ, which cuts short, not only his anticipated triumph, and the gratitude of the million, but the *real legitimate drama* at the same time.*

Leaping, then, from this parable to the conclusion of the Osbaldiston management, as, on entering the theatre, he reduced the prices, it might be argued that he reduced

* These titles are all fact, having passed through my hands while reader, and the story a fact also. I thought no monstrosity could go beyond the "Paralytic Stroke," till I convinced myself of the contrary by witnessing the "Traviata."

the mental audience also; yet I heard Kemble, say one night, as he came off the stage in Hamlet, that he never played to a more glorious one.

I did not consider our playing either the legitimate, or the illegitimate drama, except as regarded additional expense, which became more than double the second season, had anything to do with the loss of the second season. It was simply that the receipts were unequal to the outlay. And this confirmation of a practical result, must convince every mind, as well as mine, that in a proud country like England, there ought to be, as in France, a national theatre, aided by government, against loss, for the sole production of lofty, and classic dramas, where they would be witnessed by audiences, who could fully appreciate their high order of merit—too high for the general class of playgoers, who go more for amusement than instruction. Had such a theatre existed years ago, Doctor Johnson's "Irene," which, even then, was be-

yond the million, and many fine old plays, a loss to the every-day speculative manager to produce, would still be on the stage, represented by English Talmas, to the *great credit* of the country. The real legitimate drama, to such as prefer to call it so: the *regular drama* is the proper title. The French far excel us in their distinction of the *classing* of the *drama;* but the French are decidedly a dramatic nation, and support the drama like a *necessity*, which the English do not. While at the same time a great portion, I fear the greater portion of the people, do not see the *necessity* for theatres at all. It seems to me, strange, that *any* person, but the most ignorant or bigoted can discountenance the *moral* drama, while the works of Sophocles, Euripides, and the fine dramatic writings of the ancient dramatists, handed down to us from almost uncounted years, still preserve their freshness and their fame. I know of no sermon which has existed two hundred years. Sterne, and Tillotson, and Blair,

have almost lost their odour, while Shakspeare is as green as ever, like the divine rod of Aaron, perpetually putting forth fresh blossoms.

Osbaldiston, at nearly the end of the season, listening to everybody, and taking everyone's advice, with unceasing losses, seemed to lose all mastery over himself. He, therefore, by the advice of a *friend*, engaged Mr. Rophino Lacey, a gentleman of great talent, as a musical composer, and adapter, and formerly, in the time of Mr. Kemble, holding a position in the theatre, to be his, Osbaldiston's adviser and *manager;* but as Mr. Lacey could not perform impossibilities, any more than anybody else, Osbaldiston *soon* disagreed with him, and refused him the privilege of a private box, to which Mr. Lacey, as acting manager, appeared to think himself entitled, and after the close of the theatre, brought an action for compensation. Mr. Lacey lost this action, however, as it appeared the use of a box to a manager, is, simply an act of

courtesy, and not a *right*. I don't know for what purpose, but I was subpœned on this trial, together with Mr. Charles Kemble, and many others. It happened, drolly enough, when Charles Kemble was suddenly called into court, rising up somewhat hastily, his nether garment split open, and before he could make his appearance in the presence of his honour, he was compelled to retreat into the neighbouring tap-room and get sown up by an amiable old lady, who with needle and thread was ready and willing to do a kind turn to a great comedian.

Now farewell, a long farewell, to old Covent Garden, the scene of many a triumph, and many a heartburning—the latter seldom, as regarded the public, but as regarded the petty jealousies and "earwiggings," which occur in all theatres. At the close of the theatre I gladly retook myself to ruralise in sylvan glens and valley green, a short time in Twickenham, the classic retreat of the immortal Pope

Wonderful Pope! where, not far from his famous villa, and the interesting abode of Horace Walpole, and David Garrick, I sat myself down to compose a new opera for the brilliant Michael Balfe: this opera was

JOAN OF ARC,

and intended for the Theatre Royal Drury Lane; so that I was no sooner out of one theatre than I was in another. My wife and daughter were with me. It was the blue summer; and we were ensconsed in beds of fragrant flowers—flowers which I almost worship. As I gazed upon their many-coloured tints, and wandered with my affectionate partner, and my little girl, through the lovely scenes of Richmond and Twickenham—"thro' the meadows, thro' the valleys," as Rodolph says in his song in "Der Freischütz"—along the banks of the translucent Thames. I was happy, oh! how happy! I forgot all my annoyances, all my mortifications, which seemed to melt away in the pure air, like the witches in Macbeth. Balfe and his excellent wife, his

dear Lina, as he always, so affectionately, called her, came to see us very often, and a most joyous companion was then the sunny and radiant Michael Balfe. How greatly we esteemed them, and never could receive too much of their company. Sincerely do I believe never was friendship, or esteem more mutual. Under such happy circumstances, it was but natural that such inspirations, as I have heard them called, as the "Purple Cornflower," or the "Peace of the Valley," should enter an author's mind, or that the visionary and poetic character of "Joan of Arc" should develop itself, with so much romance and enthusiasm.

It was somewhat remarkable that I should be called on to write upon this subject; and my other piece, the melodrame, still playing, and has since been playing everywhere. In my melodrame, poor Mrs. Egerton was the heroine of Orleans; in the opera, Miss Romer. Balfe took home, piece by piece, the poetry, and, when finished, came again to Twickenham for more, till poem and

music were alike completed, and the libretto presented to Mr. Bunn, who accepted it immediately, and agreed without a demur, to terms. I must say, of all the managers I ever wrote for, Mr. Bunn was the most liberal; and of all the composers I ever wrote for, Balfe was the best tempered, and delighted when the slightest opportunity occurred to bestow praise, which is so encouraging to an author, especially a sensitive one like me. During the rehearsals of this opera at Drury Lane, an under current was going on at Covent Garden, (managed by Mr. Macready) inasmuch, as Serle was employed to write another *Joan of Arc*, a regular *blue fire* melodrame, in which Miss Huddard played Joan; so that even the great tragedian himself did not disclaim blue fire, when it answered his purpose. They brought out this piece some little time before we could produce ours, because, it is not so easy to hurry a heavy musical opera before the public, as a melodrame, which chiefly depends on the scene painter, and

firework-maker. It did us no harm that I was ever aware of, for our opera made quite a sensation, and ran a great number of nights to excellent houses. Balfe played in it himself; he was a baritone, and sang with great feeling, as well as taste and finish. Then I had Templeton, Anderson, Giubelei, Seguin, Miss Romer, Mrs. Anderson, and Miss Poole.

The Grieves'.

The exquisite scenery painted by the celebrated Mr. Grieve, and his two sons, Thomas and William, the most perfect scene painters in the world, as a combination; and the most perfect example of parental and filial affection I ever witnessed; for, though the sons were both, I believe, married men, they looked up to their father with a love, and deference to his talent, worthy of the minutest and most commendable record. It was a sight that made you happy to behold; in *their* scene-room, genius always found a welcome footing, and a gracious smile. Many of my happiest

moments have been passed there, inspecting their toil, which, when complete, and presented on the stage, never failed to *astonish* and *delight* the public. In this opera, Balfe's "Peace of the Valley," was thought by many to surpass his famous "Light of Other Days" in the "Maid of Artois," a work composed for the great Madame Malibran. There was, also, another song or Cavatina, by Templeton, with a magnificent violin accompaniment—"Dear Maid when thou art sleeping," worthy of all praise. To this opera, Mr. Bunn, an excellent general, added a beautiful ballet, called

The Daughter of the Danube,

in which that extraordinary posture-master, Wieland, played the Imp of the Danube, with an elasticity truly astounding. How he could distort his limbs, and absolutely transform himself into quite another person, almost made you doubt your senses, as to whether you were not in the presence of something supernatural, or under the influence of some mental delusion.

Templeton

Was a magnificent tenor, and a falsetto voice added, second only to Rubini. In the *Fra Poco of Lucia de Lammermoor*, he was very little behind that great artist. After Duprez had left England, Templeton took his part in "La Favorite," and was equally well received. Malibran always selected him as her lover in the "Somnambula, &c.," not because of any *tender* display he made, but because his voice was so sweet and expressive. Bunn tells a droll story about Malibran, pretending to be frightened (for it was all pretence) lest Templeton should actually kiss her in the "Somnambula," and Templeton assuring the lady that she might set her heart at rest, for he wouldn't kiss her for all the world—meaning that he wouldn't take such a liberty, of course, because Templeton was a man of the greatest gallantry, and always perfectly polite and chivalrous to the other sex. What Scotchman is not?

About this time Rooke, Balfe's early instructor, produced his opera of "Amalie" at

Covent Garden, which met with the utmost favour, and was really a very pretty opera. Yet, it was said, that he had been upwards of twenty years in trying to have it produced; that seems singular, but is not uncommon; such is the bad taste or caprice of some managers. I have known an opera to be accepted, terms agreed on, and the work absolutely in rehearsal; then, because some other novelty, more to the manager's fancy, was offered, he turned round upon both author and composer, without assigning the slightest cause or reason, why or wherefore, for so doing, and sent both them and their opera hopelessly adrift, without pity, without remorse, stifling, perhaps, the worshipped hopes of years. Bunn, in this respect, also, had a very liberal heart; if, upon a nearer inspection of a work, he had promised an author or composer to produce, as is not unfrequently the case, it proved practically deficient in any respect, he would candidly point these deficiencies out; and, if the party or parties concerned, took

effectual means to remedy them, he produced their work; if those parties on the other hand, felt themselves unequal to the alteration, as being too practical, he would recommend them where to apply for more experienced aid; and often has it been my task, with my trowel of dramatic mortar to patch up the delinquency. The great fault of inexperienced writers is, they are so conscientious; they will give *over* measure.

When

Mr. De Pinna

was about to produce his opera of the "Rose of the Alhambra," not the "Rose of Castille," at Drury Lane; it was found, on the stage, somewhat too cumbrous; the rose hung its head, and was buried under the almost countless numbers of leaves, which

> Encumbered the flower,
> And weighed down its beautiful head.

It fell to my lot, as head gardener in the establishment, to trim this rose-bush. It required a very delicate and fine-edged pair

of shears, not to touch the buds, of which there were many, very beautiful, and full of fragrance; some lines about a fountain in particular, were lovely, the author, 'twas *said*, was Captain Polhill. I trimmed the rose, however, perfectly to the satisfaction of the poet, without shaking off its dew-drops, and so much to the satisfaction of the composer, that De Pinna remarked, it was as if the wand of an enchanter had passed over the work, "everything was gone, yet nothing lost." This sweet opera, was not fated, after all, to be represented at Drury Lane; from one of those casualties, over which human nature can have no control, it was unavoidably delayed till it became too late in the season, and was eventually produced at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden, where it was exceedingly well received. Miss Romer was the rose, Mr. Barker the hero, and Miss Land, (niece of the extraordinary Liston,) the Spirit of the Fountain. The music was greatly admired, and the libretto also; and

be it understood, I never touched the poetry, the rose remained in all its original freshness, I merely curtailed the leaves. On a similar occasion, I was called in to perform a similar operation on another very pretty opera, at the same theatre, "The Fairy Oak." I confess, when I saw the thickness and felt the ponderous weight of this ancient tree, my heart chilled under the result, not in respect to the audience, but the composer and poet. Like an honest surgeon, however, I fully explained to them the nature of the amputation, which I must perform, to put the patient into a healthy state. They consented, unflinchingly, to undergo it; and the over-fed work, in twenty-five scenes, was returned, reduced to *three!* Yet I never wrote any words, nor touched one syllable of the rhyme; I merely omitted dialogue, and planted the "Fairy Oak," which had been, notwithstanding the title, utterly lost sight of. Here was another instance of *beautiful* poetry, in a libretto, really worthy the pen

of Byron; but fine poetry *alone*, is not sufficient to make a fine libretto. "The Fairy Oak" spread its beauty-haunted branches *many* nights, the music being greatly encored, and generally approved; and the author, Mr. Cope, unanimously called for, to bow his acknowledgments, as the *Era* terms it, "from his private box."* I frequently enquire of myself, how such composers as De Pinna, and the composer of the "Fairy Oak," go to sleep, as it were. Is this another striking example of the great difficulty English artists find in getting their works produced? That such great difficulty does exist, I have just proved, by what I have related of "Rooke's Amalie."

* At the end of the first act of this opera, I merely hit upon the idea of a fairy-haunted oak tree, which, suddenly expanding its antique branches, let ascend, seemingly, from every bough, innumerable spirits, clad in the lightest pink gauze, dotted with silver, represented by the most beautiful girls, who flew about the stage to the number of eighty. And this *tree* was executed in the Grieves' most exquisite style.

Barnett,

the splendid composer of the "Mountain Sylph," and various other works of great merit and celebrity, with a proud and proper feeling, I am afraid to think, *disgusted* with the caprice of managers, and the great difficulty of getting his pieces before the public, prefers "the noiseless tenor of his way;" otherwise, how is it, that, for so many years, we have heard little, or in fact, nothing, of this fine composer. Or how is it, that, while we run after every scrap of foreign *anything*, we do not first hunt up the genius of our own country? Poor John Bull! while he swelters his brains to show the finest cow, or sheep, or even ass, or even the finest turkey, or goose, is not national enough, in the right place, to think of showing the finest poet, dramatist, or composer. When

Captain Polhill

became lessee of Drury Lane Theatre, years ago, every one hoped, as he was a

gentleman, and a man of immense fortune, that much would be done to advance the position of English talent; but with all his fortune, without proper experience, his treasury became a cullender, through which the gold filtered itself into undeserving hands, to the loss of seventy thousand pounds, as I have been told, without the slightest advancement, that I now recollect, to the drama, music, or the profession. Amiable and pliant as he was, like Mrs. Parker's elephant, he suffered himself to be led too much by the ear, instead of leading others, for which, like most amiable people, he paid, but too dearly. Another *inexperienced* gentleman, an amateur actor, turned manager, also

Mr. Willis Jones,

in the time of the Rodwells, had been a partner, I believe, in the Adelphi, called then, if I mistake not, the Sanspareil; when that establishment was disposed of to Terry and Yates, after an interval of time, Mr. Jones felt a burning desire within

himself, to turn manager once again. He acted at intervals, "Hamlet," and some other characters of the Shakspearian order, and acted them cleverly too, but to *act* the part of a sole manager, was paramount, as the ambition of young Norval, in his histrionic breast. Withal, Jones was a cautious man, the very reverse of poor Captain Polhill, he watched and waited ten years for the right house in the right place; at length it offered itself, in the Surrey Theatre, where Davadge, who went into it with scarcely a shilling in his pocket, left off, in a few years, possessor of thirty thousand pounds, which proves that a *great* sum of money is *not* the *most* important essential to the success of a theatre. Jones, then, became lessee; it was there I saw him enact "Hamlet," and everything was carried on in the most respectable way; but, like the rooks, (or pigeons,) at Newstead, the residence of Byron, which would only remain in the rookery when certain people dwelt in the Abbey, when Jones became

proprietor of the theatre, so also the public seemed to take flight from that same popular theatre, whose treasury was but recently, a sort of cornucopia, and from whose door, policemen, as we have seen, had been employed to *keep back* the audience. The house became almost deserted: was it not strange? The more so, inasmuch, as Jones was an excellent man, and had every claim to public patronage. Who will deny, after this, that there is not a fatality about theatres? Jones applied to me in the last extremity, as Osbaldiston had done before; I wrote a piece for him; it proved an UTTER FAILURE; at least nobody came to see it: it seemed as if some witch had cast a spell over the place. Jones left it, and went to America, and within a short space, the *rooks*, and *pigeons*, also, *returned*. Speaking of those sagacious birds, rooks, it is a curious, but a *real* fact, that the day before the opening of Vauxhall Gardens, the cunning rooks all take flight, never failing to return as speedily, when that

popular place of amusement closes; this I account for, by their smelling the gunpowder brought in for the display of fireworks, which is, doubtless, anything but pleasant to the olfactory organs of these sapient sable denisons of the air.

I forgot to mention, I believe, amongst my early operatic movements, I perpetrated the poetry, or words of an opera, called "Ninnetta," it was, as everybody knows, a translation of "La Gazza Ladra," adapted by Sir Henry Bishop, for the purpose of introducing Miss Paton to the public, as the Maiden all forlorn, so shamefully wronged, as everybody knows, by the unconscious magpie. It was represented with the utmost success, at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden. Years after this occurrence, Mr. Bunn, wishing to re-produce that opera at Drury Lane, applied to borrow the score of the manager of the other establishment, Covent Garden, which was most peremptorily refused; the dog in the manger was fully realised. Bishop, who knew very well that

I was a somewhat *fast poet*, did not despair of my being able, from memory alone, to restore the work, or rather to paraphrase it. He wrote to me, therefore; I was residing then in Peckham; Bishop did me no more than justice. Next day's post, he had all the opening, and piece by piece, as usual, by post, till the whole was finished.

Madame Albertazzi

was, on this new occasion, the heroine, and a more beautiful representative of the condemned to be hanged for the loss of a silver spoon, never presented itself to tearful eye, or tender heart, than Madame Albertazzi. Her voice was unsurpassable, and, what is more satisfactory, I believe it was English. Her singing *Di Piacer*, is not to be described. But that sweet voice has long since been hushed in death, and is, doubtless, now attuning itself with angels. Poor, lovely Albertazzi died very young, after a brief career, like a bird that sings sweetly beneath our lattice, then takes flight to

more sunny regions, and, by us, is heard no more.

May 17, 1838, a new "*buffa* opera," as the bills called it, entitled "Diadesté," made its appearance at Drury Lane. Templeton, H. Phillips, Giubelei, Miss Romer, Fanny Healey, and though last, not least, charming Miss Poole; the music by Balfe; the words by the author of the "Siege of Rochelle." There was an exquisitely elegant duetto, in this pleasing little opera,

"Diadesté, charming play!"

I marvel concert singers overlook it. A brilliant reception was accorded Mr. Balfe, in "Diadesté;" and, I see, owing perhaps, to some engagement of Mr. Phillips, that, eventually, he played that talented gentleman's part himself, (Count Steno.) There was nothing that Balfe could not do. I have heard it said that, once, directing some composition of his own, somewhere abroad, the tenor asserted on the stage, that he had composed an impossible note, at which the

composer stoutly asserted he could sing it himself, and, leaping like a greyhound, out of the orchestra on to the stage, he sang the note with the greatest ease and felicity, at which the distracted tenor, tearing off his hair, (a wig, perhaps,) and tossing it into the pit, rushed out of the theatre; to bring the circumstance to a *truly* dramatic climax, it ought to be, to throw himself into the river, but I will not proceed to such a *denouément*, fine as it is, lest I should wound the always *in-tune* conscience, of my good friend Balfe.

As I have heard it reported that Mrs. Siddons said she would play anywhere if paid, and she might well say so, for wherever genius attracts, genius is surely appreciated, I never refused to write for any manager, who thought me worthy of an engagement; consequently, when that most excellent stage-manager, Mr. William West, who had got up with untiring care, many of my productions at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, transmigrated from the stage

managership of old Drury to Astley's, of which he was once the leading star, and, in fact, continued so, in the undying "Mazeppa." I wrote at his request, several equestrian pieces for that magnificent establishment. I do consider where an author succeeds at Astley's, he displays greater dramatic skill, than when writing at the national houses; for a very palpable reason, he has neither the assistance of high music, nor high poetry, and has, moreover, to shape his histrionic abilities to the footsteps of horses, in many instances, the more comprehending actors. To be sure the "animals" have four legs to sustain the weight of the drama, upon, while biped-actors have only two. The animals, also, have another recommendation: they never grumble at their parts, nor throw them up, although they very frequently throw a bad actor, and *cast* him to a *level*, which, many, who call themselves actors, richly merit.

I had by me a *tragedy*, with which I thought my friend Bunn would be astounded;

it appeared he was so; but, certainly not in the way I expected. At the same time, he very politely besought me not to quarrel with him for being of a different opinion from myself. In proportion, as I considered myself clever, you may rest assured, that I felt mortified to the same extent, at the unsparing candour of the great lessee; and, meeting my friend, West, whose kind heart was, and always is open to sympathy, I confided to him the deep feeling of disappointment, which annoyed me, relating to him at the same time, the interesting story of my *rejected* tragedy. West was instantly struck with the plot; it pleased his fancy; it was what he thought he should like to get up; in fact, it was the very thing for Mr. Batty, (lessee of Astley's,) who was just then in need of a new piece. For a moment, I was startled; I thought of Macready on horseback, how he would have addressed the Peruvians on a cream-coloured charger, caparisoned all over saddle and bridle, one knotted plume of feathers. I saw in imagination, the fiery and warlike glance of the

great tragedian, lightning flashing from his eyes, as vaulting into the astonished ranks of the detested enemy's army, on a wild Peruvian White Surrey,

He dealt terror to the foe.

As these vast thoughts *gallopped* into my imagination, they burst forth *uncurbed* from my lips. West caught the enthusiasm; till in our loud expressions, I fear to think we, without knowing it, slightly attracted the notice of the passers by, (scene Westminster Bridge) who, taking us for a couple of non-mentals, escaped from a neighbouring asylum, *alias* Bodlam, not far off, had suggested the idea of sending a policeman for our keepers, with a couple of straight jackets, just as we sheered off to the theatre, to decide on the opinion of Mr. Batty, whether the new tragedy was *worthy* his great *menage* or not. The vote was cast in our favour; and in about a fortnight, Feb. 12, 1849,

Corasco; or, The Warrior Steed,

Was *mounted* in a way, and a style, I little expected; and *ran* to my great advantage, upwards, if not more than one hundred

nights. The principal parts by Mr. F. Fredericks, Mr. Johnson, Crowther, and Miss R. Henry; and never in any theatre wherever I rehearsed, did I meet with more attentive actors, or more polite and gentlemanly conduct and attention; nor a better manager, and kinder manageress, than Mr. and Mrs. Batty.

Now, although, my productions at Batty's cover over several years, I think it better to class those pieces altogether in these pages. I succeeded so well with "Corasco," that Mr. Batty, who gave me my own terms, afterwards, retained me to write several other pieces, which were—

"The Prophet."
"The White Maiden of California."
"Marmion."
"Peter the Great."
"Azael, the Prodigal."*

* In Azael, we were rehearsing a grand chorus to the Sacred Bull, when the gentlemen of the chorus (who are not, at that theatre, kept lounging on the stage, when they are not wanted) were in request to commence the solemn invocation, they entered somewhat abruptly, for the high priests of Isis; some booted and spurred; some with whips

"Four Sons of Ayman."

and afterwards for Mr. Cooke, lessee after Mr. Batty.

Amacosa.

Mr. W. West played the hero of the "Prophet," the most difficult of parts, exceedingly well, for which he got much commended

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in their hands; one with the curry comb, and some with whisps of straw and hay, peace offerings, no doubt, for the blessed Bull, and kneeling down with great earnestness, began to chaunt in energetic voices—

O! Sacred Bull, &c.

Having proceeded thus far, during a momentary pause, some of them too naturally began *chaffing*, and could not or would not sing in unison. The word bull was *bellowed* out at intervals, individually, not in masses. Seeing the state of the case, and not being *quite* equal to Costa at the baton, I suddenly hit upon a more efficient expedient to produce a harmony. Looking at my watch, I perceived that it wanted only ten minutes of the bell ringing, (by which I had been too frequently interrupted not to recollect) for those gentlemen's dinners; therefore, I desired the call boy, seeing Mr. Batty in the ring, to give my compliments to him, and as the vocal gentlemen where so imperfect in their parts, I hoped he would not allow the dinner bell to be rung till I sent him word. As Mr. Batty was a strict disciplinarian, my sagacious chorus knew what would be the effect of the message; and, when the bell did ring, five minutes after, the grand opera in the Garden could not have boasted a more perfect chorus. Mr. Batty, who enjoyed mightily this *ruse*, sent me afterwards a handsome silver mounted whip, which I'm sure he felt that I *deserved*.

in the papers. It was a character of great study; he proved himself not merely an actor, but an artist; every actor ought to be one mentally, at all events. In the "White Maiden," a scene of startling interest was represented, which I think has never been surpassed. A young man shut up in a cavern, where the bones of the Indians are buried, dreams that, not only the spirits of the dead Indians, but the *horses* which they rode, appear to him. The Indians, clad perfectly in white, mounted on their war steeds, cream coloured every one, rose on traps, the horses as collected and still as the statue at Charing Cross. Talking of horse-taming, think of this.

The representative of "Marmion," a very handsome young man, full of vigour and life, and a splendid rider, was poor Crouther —I say poor Crouther, because eventually he proved so unfortunate. He married Miss Vincent, the celebrated manageress of the Victoria Theatre—that popular "heroine of the "*domestic drama*," as she

was justly called. Crouther went to perform at the Victoria as a star, and gallantly paid some compliments to the handsome manageress, for she was still very handsome, which she received in good earnest, for Crouther was very handsome also. The upshot of this was, they agreed to get married. Miss Vincent was rich, and kept her carriage; Crouther, though exceedingly good looking, had only his salary to depend on. The match, therefore, in a worldly sense, was a great elevation to him. They were married, but, strange to relate, even before the bridegroom had quitted the church, he began to show indications of having lost his reason, and was absolutely compelled, in a very short time, to be taken to a lunatic asylum. Some suppose, for he was a very humble-minded young man, that the change for the better in his condition was too much for his intellect. Others assert that there was a forsaken heart, which, for he had great feeling, he could not forget. So it is, that truth is some-

times stranger than fiction. Miss Vincent is since dead; but her unfortunate husband, I believe, is living.

In "Peter the Great," Mr. Ryder, of the Princess's Theatre, (as a star,) enacted the Czar; and in the same drama, Mrs. Morton Brooke the other principal character, so admirably, especially in one particular scene, when, in attempting to poison Catherine, she poisons her own son. Had she lived in the days of John Kemble, when such strong acting was the fashion, she would have been considered second only to that great actress Mrs. Siddons.

"Azaël," a paraphrase of my drama so popular at Drury Lane, was famous at Astley's for containing a flock of *real sheep*, which gave to the scene a perfectly pastoral effect.

I was one night at Drury Lane Theatre —it was the first night of a spectacle called "The Desert," (my writing,)—when one of the liverymen came to inform me that *two* ladies were waiting for me in the saloon.

Thinking this a joke practised by Rodwell, who was very fond of a practical joke, I replied, "Let them wait!" At the end of the first act, he came again, and I, all nervous, trembling like a leaf for the success of my piece, told him, somewhat sharply, to go about his business. At the fall of the curtain, however, the applause being unanimous, my agitation wonderfully subsided, and my good temper returned. On going down the great staircase, I said laughingly to the liveryman, "Well, are the ladies tired of waiting?" "Oh dear no, sir, here they are," was his reply, pointing to two ladies, who, closely veiled, seemed most enduringly awaiting my approach; and who proved, on lifting up their veils, to be no others than Mrs. Batty and Mrs. Cooke; the former not having my address, had come, *most kindly*, thinking I should no doubt be at the theatre on the first night of a new piece of my own, especially, to introduce me to Mrs. Cooke, the wife of the new lessee of Astley's, that I might be engaged to write their open-

ing piece. How abashed I felt, it is not easy for the reader to imagine, nor can I at all conceive what possible excuse I made for my rudeness. Mrs. Cooke, a perfect gentlewoman, soon relieved my embarrassment, by saying that her husband, the new lessee, not having yet arrived in London, had deputed her to see me on the subject of their opening spectacle, and no address being to be found, she had hit upon the expedient of coming to the door of Drury Lane Theatre, with Mrs. Batty, who knew me personally, thinking I should pass in that way; but I always entered from the stage, consequently they missed me, and sent the message by the liveryman, which I had repulsed with such tact, as *I thought*. I wrote the spectacle, but although I took the greatest pains with it, and it was beautifully got up, by West, the rooks had left the house with my old friends, the Battys, and it only ran, I think, about fifty nights.

On a similar occasion, previously to the

present, as I had never seen Mr. Bunn in his Shaksperian entertainment, which he gave with so much taste and eloquence, at the St. James's Theatre, I repaired thither, and had scarcely seated myself in one of the stalls, and Mr. Bunn shown himself on the boards, when *another* liveryman came to me, and said a gentleman in a carriage was waiting to speak to me at the door. Reluctant as I was to quit the theatre, lest it should look like an affront to my generous old manager, who, with his quick glance, I saw, with pleasure, recognised me in an instant. A gentleman, (not ladies on this occasion,) in a carriage, anxiously waiting for me, was a somewhat strong inducement. This gentleman turned out to be no less an important personage than Mr. Batty's treasurer, who had been to my house in Batty's carriage to take me to the theatre, and my wife had sent him to the St. James's. I promised to go early in the morning. That would not do; and I verily believe, if I had not entered the vehicle, the trea-

surer and coachman were commissioned to abduct me. It was about a new piece. The Battys seemed to consider me the only author, and all this from my rejected tragedy, Corasco; or the Warrior Steed! Of

Mr. Batty

a volume might be written. He was a most extraordinary man, endowed with a natural intellect so bright, and so penetrating, so microscopic, that it would have required a very powerful mind indeed to have deceived him on any point. His calculations were incredible, and his opinions on all subjects so clear, I would have asked it in preference to that of a Lord Chancellor. Yet he owed nothing of this to education. Born in humble circumstances, as a boy, by sheer industry, he worked his way up—purchasing first a horse, then engaging a troupe, then a theatre, till at length he retired from the profession with a good name, worth upwards, it was said, and I hope truly, of half a million of money; he deserved it, which is better. And all this

under ill health. Not by nipping and screwing, but with a generous hand, especially to those whom he considered clever and upright as himself. Of

The Four Sons of Ayman

I have not spoken here. That was a translation, attended with one of the most painful recollections of my curious life, which I will record in its proper place. I mentioned, some pages back, that I was living in a retired cottage in Peckham. The sad fact was, that my dear, affectionate wife had been taken seriously ill with an extraordinary malady—the sudden loss of memory. She scarcely recollected, from time to time, the most familiar events of yesterday, or the people about her, and made wrong answers on the most trifling and important subjects. It may be easily understood what a thunderbolt this proved to me, who loved her so. She who was so mental—so sensible—highly educated—and *such* a *companion!*—so amiable—*such* a *wife!*—such a mother! Unwilling that those who had

seen and admired her, so universally, in her clear-mindedness, should witness the tottering wreck it had at once become, I directly furnished and removed to a pretty cottage in Peckham, hoping that quietude, quite away from the town, might, by degrees, restore the tone of her once *fine* mind. I devoted myself, body and soul, to the care of renovating her faculties. I shut myself up from the world with her, and for her. I spared no pains—no assiduities—no money. I consulted the best medical advisers, amongst the rest Doctor Blundell; but with very little avail. In fact, the doctors relinquished her case as hopeless. She had, then, no physician but myself, to depend on. I looked around me for consolation in vain. The only consolation to me was, as a man, I had never deserved this singular and great calamity. But why the blow falls we are not to question. Our duty is to submit, with Christian resignation without murmuring; and, if we can, by the best applications of moral principle to the heart, endure, if

we cannot erase the bruise. The faculty had given her up; they predicted that it was impossible for her to sustain the dreadful shock beyond a few months; more probably a few weeks. The case seemed hopeless, but heaven heard me, and inspired me what course to adopt. By the gentlest means, and indefatigable exertion, I succeeded, slowly indeed, in my endeavour. I renewed her *memory*. I could not bring back robust health, which, in fact, she never really possessed; but I succeeded, with the aid of *God alone*, in restoring her once more to the rational enjoyment of life. I soon perceived that I had made a mistake in taking her into perfect seclusion; added to which, as I could not be absent from her long at a time, I lost all my employment, at a period when it was, alas! most needed. I therefore, once more returned to London, to a more cheerful scene, adjoining the Regent's Park, in the house of Doctor Edwards, a true friend; not that he or any medical man interposed with my system

as regarded my wife's malady. She continued to progress better and better, returned gradually to her old habits, and, after having been given up by the doctors, lived twelve years, restored to her family and to *herself*. The sympathy I received during this affliction, from all sorts of persons, many of them strangers, is something beautiful for the heart to dwell upon. It is only in sorrow that we really know each other; it would be well worth while for every body to become acquainted with sorrow, to find out, under the petals of what simple flowers true feeling and true friendship lie modestly and unflauntingly concealed.

Theatricals seem now going on as badly as myself, as Mr. Murphy,* the weather almanac maker, would have said. I was, however, engaged by Mr. Bunn at the ensuing Easter, to write the Easter piece at

* This Mr. Murphy was so popular for certain predictions he had made about the weather, people seemed to think him more than human. I saw him once at Mr. Bunn's; Mr. Bunn wished to engage him to lecture, *on the stage.*

Drury Lane—"The King of the Mist;" the King of the Mist, Henry Wallack. The principal character, however,

Mr. Compton,

which, as Compton would find it difficult to act anything badly, he did as well as it could be performed. Nothing could have gone better; but, I know not how it is, Easter pieces, in my time, have always seemed out of place, nor have they ever, that I can recollect, brought much money to the treasuries—especially since the time of steam or railways, which, in half an hour, take the people into the pure air of the country, miles distant, or the omnibuses which run nearly at the same rate, to beautiful gardens and parks. It was very different formerly, in the days of "Blue Beard," "Timour the Tartar," "Cherry and Fair Star," and the "Vision of the Sun," when there was no escape from the dense metropolis, but the stuffed-full stage coach, with your legs doubled under you, like a Chinese mandarin: or the still more stu-

pifying hackney carriage. I remember hiring one of these leathern *in*conveniences, once upon a time, to proceed to Richmond. We were seven hours on the road, broke down three times, and in the end forced to finish the journey on foot in a heavy shower of rain.

Theatricals in a desperate state.

Mr. Rooke produced his opera of "Henrique; or, the Love Pilgrim," with Madame Vestris at Covent Garden. Mr. Bunn, in despair, at the Opera House, tried *Concerts-a-la-Musard*; they turned out a complete failure. Penley opened the English opera with a country company; but closed it in quick time, not taking enough to pay the salaries. We had now at Covent Garden Vestris for Macready, who, notwithstanding his production of those two exquisite plays, the "Lady of Lyons," and "Richelieu," and his own talent thrown into the scale, felt it advisable to sound a retreat; one would scarcely believe it possible. Next, for the spirited Bunn, we had Hammond. If

Mr. Bunn, with all his metropolitan experience and tact, could not make it answer, it was not difficult to foresee that Mr. Hammond, clever as he was, could not; so it turned out in a very short space.

Who came to the English opera, I know not; but I find, by my dateless diary, that I did the words of "Scaramuccia," in which Mr. Balfe enacted the part of Tomaso, and Miss Rainforth, Sandrina, the best thing I ever saw her play. There was excellent comic music in this opera. Her comic talent surprised every one. I wonder some of the wandering minstrels don't revive this *petite* opera. Surely it would be a great relief to the knelling "Trouvatore," and the hectic "Traviata," beautiful as they are. I wrote also, an opera for J. Hatton, (entitled "Pascal Bruno,") who, not being able to get it represented, and not having the patience of Rooke, to wait twenty years, took it over to Germany, had it translated into that language, and, on returning, brought me a play bill, thinking that I should be

sufficiently delighted, and perfectly satisfied (as I was forced to be) at seeing my name Herr *Fix*ball inserted as the English author of the libretto. Hammond opened with a very effective spectacle, " The Fairy Lake," by Selby, if I recollect rightly, and it ran many nights, but wanted the aid of other novelties. He, Mr. Hammond, did me the favour to apply to me, and proposed the subject of " Auld Robin Grey ;" but, before I had commenced operations, he had relinquished the management; I should think, most gladly ; I afterwards transformed " Auld Robin Grey" into an operetta, for Alexander Lee, who composed the music. For one song alone, Dalmaine's people paid him two hundred pounds. " The beautiful smile of the Auld Man's Wife." Mr. Macready consented to bring this piece out on some occasion, at Drury Lane, and underlined it, but, such were the changes, it was not after all produced; I can't recollect, unless from the variations of the dramatic needle, why, for, on looking into the M.S., I

perceive some pencilled remarks in Mr. Macready's own hand writing:—

A succession of troubles—my wife's bad health, the first and greatest, the frightful state of theatricals, and a combination of disappointments about this time, had plunged me into innumerable difficulties, from which I saw no escape, so heavy and so threatening were the clouds, on every side around me. Willing, persevering, industrious as I was, I could scarcely keep up my heart; and many and oft, when memory returned to the days of my youth, did I regret even the plough, and the harrow, for which I felt such an early contempt; but my sufferings were not for myself, as may very naturally and charitably be understood. It was in this frame of mind, that I met in Regent Street my very kind, and good friend, Captain Middleton, R.N., he was in mourning, and when I enquired after his intellectual wife, he told me, with deep emotion, that he had lost her; but she had remembered me in her will! Me! How extraordinary, at such

a moment! It seemed like the manna which the angels threw down from heaven; and came as perfectly unlooked for. And he, with a most kind impulse, for I was never the man, I was far too proud to go about with a tale of necessity, paid me the money almost immediately, little thinking, *perhaps*, the good he was doing; though I'm sure, with the heart to do it.

Mrs. Middleton.

Mrs. Middleton, it should be recollected, was *the* Miss Scott, of the Sans Pareil, before it fell into the hands of the Rodwells —who, by her *uncommon* genius, both as a poetess and an actress, attracted great sums of money to that theatre. She sang sweetly, and with the utmost science, having been a pupil of Dr. Arne. As a woman, in her every-day life, she had every domestic virtue. As a companion, the *naïveté* of her conversation, abounding with wit and elegance, was like a sparkling stream, which every moment glittered with some new sunbeam. Added to this, she was divested of any

thing like jealousy of another's repute; a worshipper of genius, and never thought she could do too much in its behalf.

> A sweet little cherub sits perch'd up aloft,
> To keep watch for the life of poor Jack.

I now see a variety of efforts "to spring my bark ashore," "Oconesto" at the City Theatre, with Mr. Gladstane, an excellent gentleman, formerly one of the propietors of the Adelphi, in the sunny days of the "Pilot." Then comes the "Negro of Wapping," with Mr. Parry, at the Garrick; this was what I call "bobbing around" with a vengeance. Next of all, "Charlotte Hanwell," at Sadler's Wells. The kindest, sincerest of managers, was Bob Honnor, as he was affectionately called by all who had the happiness to know him: the part of Charlotte by

Mrs. R. Honnor.

In fact, the *real* heroine of "the domestic drama," (after Miss Kelly,) now, I lament to say, a widow. A step back, and I find myself again on the old familiar boards of

Covent Garden, with Madame Vestris, and that versatile scion of all that ever was comic, Charles Matthews. Of Charles Matthews, one might write six volumes, and then find there were six more to write, if you had not previously died in a convulsion of laughter. I always called him the theatrical eel, with the golden skin, of which no sooner had he been flayed, than another golden skin grew, and again he was flayed—but he was used to it, and skipped about after each operation better than ever. But, not to digress, "Hans of Iceland" of which (connected with Mr. Knowles) I have already spoken, was splendidly mounted. No expense was spared in the production by Madame, to whose refined taste, the English stage owes its present attention to detail. In this piece, Payne enacted "Hans of Iceland;" and, considering, the great pantominist he is, I need scarcely say, admirably! Mr. Gilbert also, and his wife, formerly the lovely Miss Ballin, with the two Ridgeways, who played

the scene so interesting to Knowles. But the enormous expense attending this production, (as is always the case) although, it certainly went with acclamations, proved a fearful drawback to its having a decided run. It required the nightly assistance of eighty carpenters to change the last scene. It could not, therefore, pay; and, as my remuneration was nightly, I sincerely believe that Madame Vestris and Charles Matthews played it, to a loss, my stated number of nights, that I might come off with, not only the credit, but the gains which they appeared to think me so deserving of.

Ancient Concerts.

The engagement I had been appointed to, by the select committee, as poet, at these fine concerts, patronized by Her Majesty, conducted by Sir Henry Bishop, now occupied much of my time; and, as the subjects on which I wrote, where all, either classic or religious, they claimed much of my *serious* attention. The personages I had now to please, were of the very highest

order and distinction. Corales, and concerted pieces, from the most ancient authors, had to be construed with the utmost care and delicacy. What a different school from that in which I had so recently practised; yet I had the great pleasure, both of success and commendation; and that in the *very highest* quarter. My various poems were inserted in the books of the different evening performances, and are, I have no doubt, in the library of Buckingham Palace, at this moment, and will be, probably, when the humble hand which wrote them, has ceased to write. I have had the happiness to hear my Corales encored, in that room, (where seldom encores occurred,) before Her Majesty, His Royal Highness, the Queen's Consort, and the room filled only with princes, dukes, duchesses, and the highest aristocracy, yet not too high to applaud. Contrast this courtly and brilliant scene, with others of a very minor description, which I have rendered a few pages back, compare the difference, and I think

even my enemies, but I hope I have ceased to have any, must admit that, at least, even when *not* dramatic, I possessed the felicitous art of suiting myself to my audience. I remained poet to these exquisite concerts, several succeeding years; in fact, till they ceased to be performed.

"Jane Paul," the "Trooper's Horn," and the "Miller's Wife," dramas of interest, occupy here, their brief space, like road-side daisies, which we admire as we pass; but the "Miller's Wife" is worthy of a more important commendation; it was decidedly the best part ever sustained by Miss Vincent. She played this more than two hundred nights. I hope the reader, ere this, will have perceived, in order to render these memoirs palatable and untiring, and the less to show the dreary and egotistical reiteration of the first personal pronoun, I have contrived, to make my narrative run on as much as possible, resembling a smooth stream, down which as we glide, the lotus flower, the

springing trout, and the purple and gold wing of the bounding king-fisher, break away attention from the sleeepy monotony of the current. This is my excuse for the characters introduced; they are my lotus flowers, my glittering trout, my purple and gold-wing'd birds; figures, whose counterparts, on the Indian screen, render its dark back-ground *more* effective, and *less* sombre.

I scramble on, here, to an opera, of the libretto of which I was the sole inventor.

Këolanthè,

produced on March 9, 1841, was one of my dream-revels with imagination—a flight across golden deserts with the Queen of Fancy. It does not follow, however, that it must prove the most successful; flights of invention, generally outstrip the comprehension of general auditors; like the ascent of Mahomet to the seventh heaven, they are very confusing, and, not unfrequently, the radiant, and perfumed feathers of your wings drop off, before public comprehension begins to beam. This

proved the case decidedly with "Këolanthè." Mr. Balfe had taken the English Opera; become a manager; Mr. Balfe, in the orchestra, is a *magician;* in management, we require a conjuror; far be it from me to insinuate that my excellent Balfe is no conjuror, I have elevated him high above that; I have crowned him a *magician*, and the difference is, the magician moves mountains larger than the Alps, and raises palaces of opal and pearls, by the mere waving of his wand; while your conjuror, like him of the Lyceum,* only deceives your eyes with *tricks*, not invented by himself, and, which everybody knows to be a deception. Yet, for a manager of a theatre, your tricks, and traps, are far more in request to carry on the war, than even the sublime influence of a Prospero.

This "Këolanthè" is unquestionably, the best of Balfe's operas, that is to say, his *finest original* conception, and advances nearer to

* Anderson, the celebrated conjuror.

the stars. "Këolanthè," the heroine, is somewhat beyond a girl, being, at the commencement of her first appearance on any stage, at least, three thousand years old. And, although, to question the age of a lady, especially after a doubtful period, is at all times a great deviation from the strict rules of chivalry, yet, as I possessed a spell beyond Atkinson's "Bloom de Ninon," to dissolve her wrinkles, restore her to beautiful youth, to enhance the value of my prescription, (especially should I insert it in the Times,) I may be forgiven by the sex, I hope, for thus disclosing the age of my Heroine of the Pyramids.

Madame Balfe

was Këolanthé; the dignity of the princess, was nothing lost in her; the splendour of her voice, the richness of her attire, the fineness, the grandeur of her acting, (she was a *great* actress, realizing to my imagination, all I had heard related of "Clairon,") the supernatural manner which she assumed, took everyone by surprise,

while her *deep-thought* conception of the part seemed to set everyone *thinking*, (a mental requisite, at that time, never over resorted to by English artists, in general, who seemed to imagine the putting on of a Roman toga, made you a Roman, or that a large pair of brown hollands transformed you into a Dutchman). Wilson, a fine tenor, was the student Andréo; Stretton and H. Phillips, Fillippo and Ombrastro—Miss Gould, Pavina.

This opera cost, in the getting up, with its exquisite costumes and scenery, much more than a thousand pounds; it certainly had a tremendous reception; the stage covered over with wreaths of flowers, amongst which stood Madame Balfe, like Iris, with her offerings of garland lotuses at her feet.

The Earl of Westmorland.

As the curtain fell, I was passing through the lobby, to effect my escape, when lo, and behold, up comes running another of the box-keepers, telling me that my Lord

of Westmorland, now Earl, had sent his compliments, and requested to speak to me. Incredulous, as I had not the honour to possess the least knowledge of his lordship, I told the man that he must have made an egregious mistake. At that moment, up came his lordship, with all that air of noble affability, which is so peculiar to him, and so indicative of true greatness. "No," said he, "Mr. Fitzball, the man is *not* mistaken, I *wish* to speak with you; I *wish* to congratulate you in unqualified praise, on the amply deserved success of your new opera" I did not thank his lordship, but simply replied, evasively, "The *music*, my lord, is really charming."

"And the *poem* of which I now speak, equally so." At an expression, so frankly used, I *did*, most gratefully, thank this nobleman, because there was no mistaking his sincerity. At the same time, such a compliment, from such a great person, so highly educated, with his refined and travelled taste, was something indeed for me,

in my humble position, to be proud of; from that hour to this moment, a truer and a kinder friend I do not possess in the world, than the gracious Earl of Westmorland.

In a *few* evenings, Her Majesty, and His Royal Highness, the Prince Consort, came also, to hear the opera, condescendingly, and graciously passing through a narrow passage, hastily opened, to their box, scarcely wide enough for one person at a time. I must say that they appeared exceedingly interested at the development of the plot; the most flattering approval was conferred on the music; nor was the poet forgotten. The book, I was told, pleased mightily, especially from its Germanic construction. This opera has since been translated into German, and produced in Berlin.

To show what a creature of impulse Balfe was, they were one morning rehearsing an opera, by Edward Loder, when I happened to enter the theatre, and standing somewhat apart, P.S. I am always very diffident of encroaching where I have no

business, although during my own rehearsals I have frequently found myself surrounded by *strangers*, especially at the Theatres Royal, of whom, or their business there, I had not the remotest notion; but, seeing there was only a singing sort of rehearsal going on, as if everybody's ears had been fastened by an invisible string, to the piano-forte, as the opera was coming out in a night or so, upon the privilege of friendship with the manager, I ventured, without a word, to take the hand of Madame Balfe and lead her into the position she would have to occupy at night. They had forgotten all about the acting part, singers generally do; this simple movement, however, produced such a salutary effect, that every one, on the stage, involuntarily extended his or her hand, to be led into a position also. This circumstance caused not only me, but all present, to laugh heartily. It was a concerted piece, and when I said "Now, strike up!" Balfe gave a stunning blow on the piano, enough to

crack every string within it, and the effect of the combined voices flowing and harmonising from their right distances, made *all* the difference. "Stop a bit!" said Balfe, when it was over, and seizing a pen, he hastily wrote something on a large piece of paper, then abruptly disappeared with it into the green-room. In a few minutes he returned, like a man that has done some great conscientious duty, smiling as nobody ever did, or could smile, but Balfe, for, he always seemed to me, to have a succession of smiles, lurking one under the other, like circles in a sunny lake.

I was very speedily told what this mysterious document contained, it was—"Mr. "Fitzball is to be looked on, in this thea-"tre, like myself," &c. In fact, I was appointed manager, which honour I modestly but *gratefully* declined; I say *gratefully* declined, because had it been an appointment to the Lord Chancellorship, Balfe would have conferred it with the same enthusiasm. He had a generous *Irish*

heart, much too warm for the heart of a manager, because, as I have invariably found, to my deep mortification and regret, business and impulses are invariably counteractions.

I am not inflicting a history of the drama of the last half century, heaven forbid but it seems to me, as if at this interval managers were dancing a quadrille. It is rather difficult to find, or remember their whereabouts. Macready, however, was at Drury Lane. I wrote for him an operetta called "The Queen of the Thames," and although a trusty and most *common-sensed* friend of mine remarked facetiously, "What a capital opera that would have been had the music been left out." The songs, by J. Hatton, were exceedingly pretty, and full of melody; but music was never the order of any theatre managed by a tragedian, any more than tragedy was the order of a theatre managed by a singer. A manager ought to be neither. Still "The Queen of the Thames," (Miss Romer,) proved very

successful, and ruled the waves for many nights.

John Wilmot.

Of all the prompters and stage directors in my time, he was the *truest to an author*—a rare qualification, for they are all too fond, the very best of them, of ascribing the merits of any piece to their own getting up, seldom allowing the poor devil of an author to venture an opinion on the best way of producing his own work. Here, again, the French are *ages* before us. But things are not so ferocious in this respect as they were formerly in England. I have seen combustions of this kind take place, from the *over cleverness* of stage managers, as would scarcely be credited by inexperienced ears.

Years ago, I wrote "Der Freschütz" for the Surrey; it was quite a different version from the opera, being a decided melodrama. The theatre, then, belonged to a family of the name of Johnson, who *kept the public house* next door; their head *waiter* acting as

a sort of manager; they were excellent people, and paid *uncommonly* well, it being to their interest, on account of the sale of spirits, &c., in their bar, to keep the house open, they understood little, indeed, about the affairs of stage management; I was therefore, to get up my own "Der Freschütz." All went on swimmingly, I don't mean to be satirical by *swimmingly*, when, as if to put in a great idea to assist me, in my undertaking, the head waiter hit upon the clever expedient of having a set of *real* Germans to *lend a hand*, as he called it. Accordingly, arrives on the stage, four *hares*, as the waiter called them, (herrs) bearded up to the eyes, and for *hares*, they looked the ugliest set of *hounds* I ever gazed on. But one of them was the original Casper; and I'm afraid to remember, at the head of this startling reinforcement, was my kind old friend and first operatic master, Mr. Hawes, the King's lutist, who, speaking with all respect, apart from his piano, knew as little about O. P. and P. S., as I did of

sharps or flats; he was, however, only the envoy. Well, I said nothing, and the rehearsal began. The utility of these Germans may be imagined, when it comes to be explained, that not one note of Weber's music was introduced, except the Huntsman's and Bridal choruses, and the drama, an original one, quite different from their own. They not knowing English, we not knowing German, an extraordinary confusion ensued. I very soon found that I knew nothing about it, and, therefore, sat quietly down to take a lesson on my own production. Imitating my example, every one concerned except the HARES, sat down, to take a lesson also; Mrs. Young (Mrs. Honey's mother) played Agnes, and began to show her resentment; but I besought her to be tranquil, otherwise we should never witness the final *grande tableau*. At length, our allies began to get into terrible confusion themselves; they could not proceed unless I proceeded first—like the shadow, they could have followed; but I had become spiteful, and refused; so

they went on, and on, delineating nothing, till it came to the incantation scene, where they sadly stuck; not knowing exactly anything of the *underground* part of the plot about the churchyard lead, or the casting of the balls. The prompter wickedly proposed getting rid of them, by letting them down the trap with the stove, but that I stoutly refused to sanction. A dead stop was the result. Now arrived the acting manager, with two or three pewter pots on each thumb, the *Herrs* brightened up at this, seeing the pewter, they imagined that the churchyard lead had actually arrived to their aid. A very different result awaited them; the head waiter, with all the tact of business, soon discovered his error, and finding things at a standstill, caused, very quickly, in language, which, luckily for themselves, the Germans did not understand, although the interpreter did, a decided clearance of Casper, and his friend, Zamiel, who vanished without the aid of either blue or red fire, in a twinkling. Again the piece

went on, and was acted some hundred and twenty nights; and Elliston, who succeeded to the management, revived and played it many nights more. In fact, it was my first business acquaintance with the great commedian, Robert William Elliston, Esq.

But as this was now merely a minor, and a mismanaged theatre, it did uncommonly well, considering its pretensions. I shall relate another anecdote of a similar kind at a Theatre Royal, no less than the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Julian had become the Lessee of this establishment; "The Maid of Honour,"* Balfe's music, my libretto, was in rehearsal. We had something like six stage-managers, all men of the greatest talent; one could draw comic characters with his pen; another swallow an orange whole; another could tell whether Julius Cæsar wore a *brutus* or not; some directing orally; some directing silently. What, on earth, could have surpassed such a *compact arrangement?* Three known, three unknown, stage directors; one the most

* The English "Martha."

mysterious, in green spectacles; and enough was there for them to do. Two hundred soldiers on the stage, having no idea what they were there for! in fact, the stage was so beautifully full, to produce a grand effect, that it was almost necessary for poor Miss Birch, the *prima donna*, to come up a centre *trap*, the crowd was so great. The most imposing sounds heard of the grande opera, were the somewhat discordant and contradictory notes of the three *literary* men, and the orange swallower, at the tops of their voices, *do—don't*. In vain, poor disconsolate Balfe, like the knight of the woful countenance, knocked his baton on the new grand piano, and Mr. Thomas Chappel, the purchaser of the music, who had come to select the rich and pungent morceaus of the opera, cast an eye, of somewhat regret, upon the battered instrument, such an eye, as the worthy Isaac of York is supposed, by Sir Walter Scott, to have cast on the armour of Ivanhoe, during the combat, his heart beating at every thrust it received from the grim assailant, lest

every bruise should lessen its value. At length, the *six* brought things to such a combustion, that it was necessary to call for the parish engine, or the author, the greater *damper* of the two; while the music purchaser, who felt as if he had holes in the toes of his varnished boots, and the sovereigns in his pant-pockets were forcing their way inside, down those peculiar garments, to effect their terrified escape at the aforesaid outlets, began also to chime in with the general call for the *culprit*, that is to say, more properly speaking, the unhappy author. The author reiterated Balfe; the author, reiterated the *six;* author murmured the two hundred soldiers, curious, no doubt, to see if an author were a horse or a currycomb, or whether they were to attack him with their bayonets. That was the first time I had the honour to be universally called for on the stage. Thinking, perhaps, that they might be going to toss me in a blanket, as the Egyptians were accustomed to torture an innocent victim, to appease the fury of the storm-gods, I stood

a little apart shivering, and said nothing. This, strange to say, produced a general silence; a circumstance which induced the three *silent* managers to consider, in their own minds, that, after all, there was nothing like the author. Frightened out of my wits, I did venture to say, however, if the vocal parts of the opera were rehearsed at one time, and the military, with their iron heeled boots, marching, at another, it would be, probably, more to the advantage of both; this was carried, unanimously; the soldiers marched off O.P., the music proceeded, and the speaking *three* retired; one to draw a die-of-laughing sketch for the pantomine; the other, to swallow *two* whole oranges, to the perfect astonishment of the ballet girls in the second green-room; and number three, hurried to the British Museum, to make still deeper researches into the bottom of Julius Cæsar's wig.

Peace restored, music, "bewitching music," once more, like the robin at the window, descended to participate in our

crumbs of comfort—Sims Reeves was himself again; all the half-shades of his notes told, like the finest vibration of a railway whistle, heard through the amber-scented mouthpiece of evening, twenty miles distant. Balfe's cheeks reassumed their appley form. Chappel's toes of his varnished boots seemed stitched up by fairy hands, while the resuscitated sovereigns began to reascend, like sparkling beewings, to the brim of his pocket; and the author, now forgot, fell back, like the snail when the rain is over, into his dreamy shell again.*

Balfe told me, not long since, that he

* Keeping up one's dignity, under peculiar circumstances, is very difficult. I remember an anecdote, an old one, of a country schoolmaster, who, being patronised by a *real* lord, during the election, invited his lordship, in return for his vote, to investigate his school. The lord, in due time, arrived at the school, and, to the infinite terror of the boys, who had all had their hair cut, walked through the school-room stiffly enough with his hat on. The master, however, walked *before*, still more stiff than his lordship, with his *hat on* also. When they left the apartment the poor master, most obsequiously doffing his hat, begged his lordship's pardon; adding, as an excuse, "If any of my boys had conceived for an instant the possibility that there could be a greater man than myself, I should for ever have lost my ascendancy."

always considered "The Maid of Honour" his most finished performance. He is, or ought to be the best judge of that, although we are very few of us best judges of ourselves. The public are the truest, sincerest judges, after all: they never flatter, and always approve without prejudice; so long as they are with me, I care little for individual opinion. The public seemed mightily pleased with this new opera; the plot, in particular, was exceedingly amusing. "We come when you ring the bell," and the "Arm Chair," were *gems* of admirable *setting*.

Mr. Sims Reeves

never played, or sang better than in the young farmer, which he looked to perfection; where he loses his mind, how truthful he was to character. The house melted into tears, while he, so touchingly, poured forth, from the deepest recesses of his heart, that popular cavatina—"In this old chair my father sat."

Mr. Weiss

was by no means far behind him in excellence, both as to singing and acting. Never were two more proper young farmers seen at statute fair.

Miss Birch,

also, as the pretty and accomplished serving-maid, exerted herself to the utmost. Her fine, finished voice told amazingly in the "Red Cross Knight," and "Breathe not the secret here." How charmingly she looked in the Masque. And Madame Weiss as Queen Elizabeth, and Miss Miran as Apollo—how melodiously and gracefully they gave finish to the scene. For my share of this opera, I received a certain sum on the first night, but if it continued to run till it reached twenty-five nights, I was to receive an additional sum of fifty pounds. On the twenty-fourth night it was stopped, and succeeded by "Lucia di Lammermoor." It was very mortifying to come so near the mark; but, like a losing

gamester, I was compelled to chew the cud of disappointment, and put a good face upon the matter. The publisher was the apparent winner. It so happened, however, that the race had not ended; for at night Madame Dorus Gras was taken ill, and the manager had no alternative, but to play "The Maid of Honour," which completed my term of nights. And be sure that the snail was not slow in creeping out of his shell, to refresh himself with this golden shower; which, I must add, was accorded with a *most willing* smile. But I have always found, in that same worthy publisher, a most pliant and excellent friend, under trying circumstances, where sympathy was a more valuable balm, than money could have purchased. Of those gentlemen — the Beals, the Chappels, and Addison, proprietors of nearly all my operatic works—I cannot speak in measured terms: there seemed but one liberality amongst them— not to forget Jeffries, himself a capital poet, Leader, and Brewer, though last, not

least. I should say, for these worthies, and several others, I have written at least five hundred, or more songs and ballads. One charge I have to bring against them of unfairness, which is, in their advertisements they invariably omit the name of the poet. Had they generally inserted my name in the advertisements, to my numerous ballads, as well as that of the composers, by an accidental glance at the *Times* I *might* have been *seen* as well as heard of, and the awkward circumstance I am now about to relate never have occurred. Speaking of ballads, although it transpired but recently, I think I cannot record an anecdote on that subject in a better place. One day, dining with no less a personage, than that most esteemed and valuable friend of mine —

Sir William de Bathè, Bart.,

he, who takes a *great* anxiety in my interest, which anxiety, as may naturally be concluded, is a kind and disinterested one, in expressing his indulgent approval of some poetry of mine in a work I had recently

published, entitled "*The House to Let*," expressed surprise that I did not write for some of the magazines. My reply was that I doubted if any of the editors of the magazines had heard my name, and that I felt assured not one of them would pay me the slightest attention, even if I sent them an article—especially a poetical one. Sir William was positive in his opinion, and called it affectation on my part; therefore, merely to convince *him*, more than otherwise, the next day, at Hookham's library, Bond Street, I requested a number of a magazine, to find out how to address a letter to an editor. It was curious enough, the very first leaf I opened, contained an essay on the present ballad-writers of England. This looked very like a presage of good: the Romans and Athenians would have hailed it as a certain omen of victory. Events sometimes go by contraries. The essay in question enumerated almost every scrap of song in the kingdom; but not *one word* of poor, unknown, never-

heared-of, (as I had predicted,) Fitzball. It is no more startling than true, that some of my songs, for instance—"My Pretty Jane," "When I beheld the Anchor Weighed," "Let me like a Soldier fall," and many others, had become almost national—had been sung everywhere where the English language is spoken, even in the trenches of the Crimea, accompanied by the thundering of cannon, and the bursting of shells. Yet *this* reviewer, who took upon himself to let the know-nothing public into all the secrets of ballad beauty, and their gems, had never, by the slightest chance, heard of me, or of my songs. He had heard, however, of *one* Thomas Moore; but, he had, also, heard of *a poet*, insinuatingly said to be, if not equal, at a very little distance behind the inspired author of *Lalla Rookh*—a Mr. Trumps, from whose songs numerous, and I acknowledge *beautiful*, were the quotations in the essay. Although, by way of confessing the *truth*,

I was too conceited to think them, in any respect, superior to my own; I thought this would have perfectly satisfied my friend Sir William; but he was inflexible, and nothing would appease him, but my writing a letter of remonstrance to the editor. I did so; simply stating that I felt a *little* hurt at being so utterly lost sight of, in his article on ballad writing. I begged to let him know that I had published *several* songs, which, by their immense sale, I concluded, met with the approval of the world; amongst them the aforesaid "Pretty Jane," which, after having gone through innumerable editions, and twenty years singing, and was singing, as popular as ever, at that time, by Mr. Sims Reeves, had been *resold*—that is, the copyright, to Messrs. Goulding and D'Almaine for £500 sterling. Therefore, judging from *results*, without being liable to be taxed with egotism, I hoped he would consider it was rather an omission in his essay, at least, a *trifling* omission, to have

overlooked me. To this I expected a castigating reply, or a still more annoying silence. Sir William was right. The effect was quite the reverse: most explanatory, and most gentlemanly. Let the writer speak for himself; it is a *startling disclosure.* Read the editor's letter:—

"My Dear Mr. Fitzball,—

"I have just received your letter. You "have an undoubted right to complain. I "regret the omission, but was not aware of "it until you pointed it out. The paper in "question was written by *Mr. Trumps him-* "*self*, and though I certainly read the "proof, I did so very hastily—too hastily, "and so lost an opportunity, which, I "assure you, I would gladly have availed my- "self of, of saying a kind word of one who "at various times, and on various occasions, "whether as song writer, or dramatist, has "afforded me *so much* pleasure. But an "opportunity *will* occur of repairing this

"omission; if not, *I* will make one, and "do you justice. With good wishes,

"Believe me,

"Very truly yours,

"———————."

On reading this most gratifying letter, written by one of the first literary men, I cordially, from the depths of my heart, forgave Mr. Trumps his forgetfulness; for, after all, it was perhaps forgetfulness, (we poets, all of us, are at times very lost and abstracted,) and I, on my part, cast a laurel to his genius, too bright to require the aid of self-commendation.

"Mary Melvin," a drama at the Adelphi, brings back forcibly to my remembrance that most lady-like and fascinating actress,

Mrs. Yates.

It has always been a matter of regret to me, much as I desired it, that I never hit upon a part worthy of that lady's talent in any of my numerous Adelphi dramas, especially as she took such pains to render

what I did effective, as in "The Earthquake," "Mary Melvin," &c., &c. Buckstone carried the palm from me there, in his "Wreck Ashore," "Victorine," &c., he identified the pieces with Mrs. Yates, she *was* Victorine, *the* Victorine; I never saw any other actress who could approach her in Victorine. In her acting, a little reserved. perhaps; but in her, that was a beauty, like the faint blush, on what is called the maiden rose; she was so feminine, a qualification in women, which I always adored. Inasmuch as I detest an effeminate man, so I always feel disgusted with a masculine woman, even on the stage. Mrs. Yates as Rosalind, was perfection; her Lady Teazle, in the "School for Scandal," has left no equal. I'm afraid, in my time, I shall not look on her like again.

> She has gone from our gaze,
> Like a bird from the bough—

with many others, whose loss I do not see replaced. Her son, I hear, is one of our best *farce* writers; the intellect of the

father and mother, will naturally enough burst forth in the son; the glow-worm of glow-worms will shine! It is the nature of glow-worms: who is to prevent it? I might add a hope that he would not leave himself to depend on stage-writing, or the stage; but how can a delinquent like me, presume to offer advice to others? I, who in my own early days, dashed back the lightnings of admonition on Jove, himself. An old letter here, presents itself to my eyes, written years ago, to me, by Frederick Yates Esq., the father of the above; I insert it merely to prove what reliance he placed on me, and when you come to recollect what a *highly* intellectual man he was, a letter like this is something for a *practical* author to be proud of, just after the manager has read his new, and that a *very dangerous* piece, to the company.

"My dear Sir,—

"I read to-day, with *good effect;* pray "be particular about the snatches of songs "for Mrs. Fitz; Miss Glover too, must have

" *two* ballads. Do what you can for Mr. " Downe; he will call upon you. Look in " *daily* at the Adelphi, and the property " room.

" Yours faithfully,

" Frederick Yates."

The interpretation respecting the vulture, means, the piece was called the " Black Vulture," which somewhat astounding part fell to O. Smith; what was more astounding, he never grumbled, which I took to be a bad omen; (it proved otherwise.) This piece was so truly outrageous and imaginative. I was rather afraid; but it had now become the fashion, both with the performers and the public, to anticipate these sort of desperations from my pen—they expected it. O. Smith had to descend in the very first scene, as an enormous vulture, from the summit of a gigantic mountain, at the foot of which, Hemmings, as a heart-crushed slave, was chained to the rocks, and doomed, *unceasingly* to *turn* a *ponderous* iron wheel, which washed gold into the

stream on which he toiled. What an anticipation of the diggings. It may seem ridiculous to the reader, but the effect was most extraordinary, and when the vulture *made a long speech*, you might have heard a pin fall in that crowded house. I think it will be naturally understood, that the vulture, who, in his flights over the mountain, had witnessed the misery of that poor despairing slave, was no other than Lucifer, who is constantly on the look out, come to offer a change. This change, goaded on by the iron wheel, which gnawed into the slave's soul, was of course accepted; when the desolate rocks changed into the sparkling pilasters of a sumptuous palace, the hard iron mill, into a silken ottoman, and the wretched rags of slavery became a blaze of refulgent jewels, the result is not difficult to be guessed; and the vulture, himself, laughed in triumph: as O. Smith, alone could laugh. I produced, also, at the Adelphi Theatre, "Alma," a burlesque on an opera of that name, and "Ondine,"

both of which succeeded, and were played in many theatres; in the latter,

Mr. Wright

played for me, whose comic talent is enough to make a piece. Since the days of Liston, there has been nothing to remind you of him, like Mr. Wright. Speaking of Liston and Wright, conjures up in my mind, as is no wonder, a comical incident, which would serve the latter as a farce. Being at Brighton last summer, I took it into my head that I would go one Sunday morning, to the Pusyeite church and see the ceremony. The pews are all open and long, and my place being at the further end, behind a column, I could neither see nor hear; however, kneeling down when the rest knelt down, I contrived, like too many others, to keep up a devotional outward appearance, when suddenly, and in an instant, I felt myself enveloped in darkness, like a candle expiring under an extinguisher. I thought that my time was come, that I had fallen into a fit; and making, what I

considered, my death struggle, was soon enlightened by a lady, who had entered without seeing me, lifting up, in some confusion, her crinoline, under which she had inadvertently ensconced me. Who, after this can deny, that fact is not more strange than fiction, only fancy Wright under Mrs. F. Mathews' crinoline, picture his supplicating look, and her overpowering indignation.

1843. It appears to me that Mr. Bunn, now once again, ascends the dramatic throne, and is again in the ascendant at Drury Lane. No sooner is the sceptre in my old manager's hand, than I am, without the least solicitation on my part, thanks to his kind remembrance, in my old position, of reader to the theatre. This is a place of *great trust*, the meaning of which is to the unsophisticated, to read carefully all M.S.S. sent in for acceptance, more especially by unknown authors; the works of *known* authors, I always stipulated for the managers to read themselves, as it might have brought about a jealousy, and a painful

feeling to both parties, viz, the author reading, and the author read. The great advantage of a reader in a theatre is, that no M.S. *can be lost.* It is the duty of the reader, if it will not serve the interest of the establishment, or is unactable, to punctually return a M.S. *kindly*, and with *thanks* to the author; and if that be possible, *without wounding* his *feelings.* I have read as many as two hundred different pieces, during a season, not one of which could possibly have suited the establishment; but where I saw the *slightest* chance, I always most strenuously urged the manager to *peruse* it. Some M.S.S. wanted one thing, some another; most of them wanted *practicability*, others were unsuited to the occasion, and many too stupid, for any theatre.

We opened again with the "Siege of Rochelle," and that, most lovely of all ballets, "The Peri," the Peri, (in perfection,)

Carlotta Grisi,

that most lovely of dancers, and the most Peri-like, and agile. In one particular scene, she absolutely seemed to *fly down* from the top of the stage to the bottom, into the arms of her lover, (Pettipas,) which effect appeared so real, and it was *no* trick, that every night her flight was encored. She absolutely did throw herself fearlessly down, descending on the tips of her toes, as lightly as a bird. My first duty, for I was not merely engaged as reader, was to translate and adapt the words of Donizetti's opera of "La Favorite," in which the great French tenor,

Mons. Duprez,

had been engaged to sing. His first appearance, however, was in "Guillaume Tell," in which, with his exquisite voice, and pure style, he made a most powerful sensation, despite of several annoyances occurring during the evening; in the first place, Leffler, who played Tell, was dead hoarse, and trying to do his best, sang so

croakingly as to make the people laugh; then a speech was made, causing the audience to laugh still more; then the arrow missed its mark, which drew down hootings and hissing. Notwithstanding these vexations, Duprez brought all into good humour, by the splendid way in which he rendered the finale, drawing down one burst of approval from the audience. A very awkward mistake occurred, also, at my house, as regarded this gentleman, occasioned by, as I think it is Mrs. Trollope calls them, one of the greatest "plagues in life," a maid-servant. Duprez had promised to call and try over some of the words of "La Favorite." And I said to the girl, should a gentleman call this morning, in a carriage, of the name of Duprez, now, mind, and be sure make no mistake, I *will* see him, and no one else.

In a very short space, the carriage did arrive; a loud knock ensued at the door; a long pause took place in the passage, the carriage drove off again, and Mons.

Duprez in it. Door of drawing-room opens, enter Plague, flourishing triumphantly a card in her hand. Mountseer Duprez's card.

"Where's Mons. Duprez?"

"Gone!"

"Gone?" astonished.

"Yes; I told him you would see anyone else, but *not him*;" and this, with an air of the highest satisfaction, at the idea of having complied exactly with my request.

The reader may conjecture my frame of mind. In double quick time I started off for Mons. Duprez's hotel in Leicester Square, with an explanation, but the great tenore, though he spoke English, as a Foreigner, well, could not exactly comprehend my agitated excuses; and, I fear to the last, thought he had a just right to feel himself irrevocably affronted.

His performance in "La Favorite" was even more admired than in "Guillaume Tell;" the sweetness of his voice; the truthfulness of his delineation; so perfect in every part. Miss Romer, also, shone wonderfully

in this delightful opera; her dying scene under *the* cross, was a fine and powerful piece of real tragic acting. No mistake or accident occurred during this opera; and, although I have since seen it represented, both in French and Italian, by the finest singers, I do not believe it could be in any theatre better sustained, nor with more pathos, than by the inspired allies of that evening, the French tenore, and the English *prima donna*—Mons. Duprez and Miss Romer.

Mrs. Warner.

It must have been under the management of Mr. Bunn, or Mr. Anderson, because I was not with Mr. Macready, that going one night during the performance of the first piece into the green-room, I found Mrs. Warner pensively seated on one of the sofas by the fire. She appeared plunged in thought; and, with her rich black velvet and plaid robe spread out, and a tiara of jewels on her graceful brow, looked as if Melpomene herself, had decended to take her

throne there, in that green-room. Just above her head stood the bust of Siddons, as if gazing in mute curiosity, on the beautiful living likeness of herself. Not to disturb thoughts, no doubt, sublime, I walked noiselessly towards the fire, and leaning against the mantelpiece, gazed also in silent admiration for a moment on the fine study of a queen before me—the proud, guilty queen of the irresolute, but equally guilty and ambitious, Macbeth. In a second, Mrs. Warner woke out of her dream of poesy, and I, withdrawing my eyes, sat down in my turn, and said nothing. After the pause of an instant or two, she spoke—

"I suppose, Mr. Fitzball, has forgotten me?"

"Not at all, madam, I was afraid of quite the reverse. Who that ever once had seen a display of your talent on the stage, could forget you? Remember the last time we met, you were the daughter of a poor Innkeeper of Abbeville. Now you are a Queen of Scotland. One may be excused

for being somewhat diffident in your royal presence."

She smiled, but sighed, remarking as to my first allusion. "That's a long time ago! I'm *greatly* changed since then."

"For the better," replied I, "I thought that impossible once; now, I perceive, my error."

"At all events, I perceive, you know how to speak compliments," answered she, but, smiling.

"Truths!" I added.

A few words of the past brought us rapidly to a general conversation on the drama. On the gradual decline of the drama, ever since our last meeting, twenty years before; she complained bitterly of the state the stage had fallen into.

"And yet," I observed, agreeing, nevertheless, with all she asserted, "had your three Weird Sisters foretold us two—to you for instance, that you would become the Melpomene of the time, in the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, in her place, whose

marble image is, as it were, looking down upon you at this moment, as if it would speak to you in approving terms; or predicted to me, that I should one day, also, become the reader both here, and at the other theatre, in which the great Reynolds, Morton, and even Sheridan, had performed the same duty, why, my dear Madam, we should have wished the last twenty years as heartily jumped over, as we now wish them as heartily to jump back again. Recollect Pope's adage—

Man never *is*, but always to *be* blessed.

"Nor woman, either," she would have replied, when the prompter's boy, popping into the room with his squeaking falsetto voice, cried out, "Mrs. Warner!" and Mrs. Warner disappeared to enstain her hands, for the many hundreth time with the golden blood of Duncan.

It was with unqualified success Mr. Bunn produced his famous "Bohemian Girl," with Balfe's music. And, if we are to judge by its attraction and long run, the

very best criterion, it was the most popular English opera ever yet produced. Miss Romer, Arline; Mr. William Harrison, the splendid tenor, Thaddeus, her Bohemian lover; Miss Betts, (the heroine of my Robber's Bride), the Gipsy Queen; Stretton, Devil's Hoof. It was a capital cast, and with such sweet melodies, so suited, more particularly at that time, to the English taste. Indeed, to all time, for I must think that the Trouvatores and Traviati are a little out of our grasp, however lustily we climb the pole to reach them. For real old English taste there is still a greater charm in a little bit of pure melody, administered by the hand of Bishop, Balfe, Barnet, Laurent, Alexander Lee, or Wallace. The drum of your ear, Johny Bull, is not exactly an *Italian* instrument, however much you submit for pride sake, to have it *bored* with chromatic passages. Mr. Bunn was excessively ill during all the rehearsals of this opera. It was amazing to see with what endurance he submitted to his bodily suffer-

ings, and directed the operations on the stage. Mr. Bunn, both as manager and author, had one great good quality seldom to be met with; his ear was never closed to an opinion; nor was he ever offended with the person, however humble, that offered it, whether on reflection he thought best to adopt the advice or not, which he sometimes did, and most complacently. Great was the triumph of the "Siege of Rochelle;" but far greater of the "Bohemian Girl," which the public needs not be told. Miss Romer surpassed her former self in "I dreamt that I dwelt in Marble Halls;" and Harrison became immortal by his singing—"When other lips." At this production of this fine English opera, I might, with reason, have felt myself somewhat affected by jealousy, because, till then, I had been considered the libretto writer of the day; that is to say the English libretto writer; most sincerely did I throw down the palm to the refulgent genius of Mr. Bunn. But I hear that he, on his part, has since done

me the greatest justice in return. Mrs. Wallack informed me that somewhere in America where Mr. Bunn was delivering a lecture, he spoke of me in the most approving terms, and said that I was considered the best lyric poet of my period, and he was bound to believe it true, as the composers *all* seemed to like composing my words better than those of any other writer.

It was during the run of a spectacle, called the "Desert," the piece, I think, I was witnessing the first night of, when I was so polite as to keep two ladies waiting for me all the while during its representation; I was punished for my want of gallantry, perhaps, exactly as I deserved. I had some M.S.S., which I was requested *immediately* to peruse; and having left them forgetfully on the Saturday night at the theatre, was compelled to go thither for them on the Sunday morning. Now, it so happened that there was a passage passing under the stage to the opposite side of the theatre, where these books were deposited,

through which, for dispatch, I resolved to make my way; but, no sooner had I inserted myself into this avenue, than I found myself as much arrived in darkness of the densest kind, as if a total eclipse had taken place. I was as completely lost and bewildered as a man in a pyramid, or the labyrinth of Crete. On the week days this passage was lighted by gas, which I had utterly forgotten. This was not the case on a Sunday: no person being in the theatre, but the hall porter at the street door. I looked through the intense darkness for the door at which I entered; it was neither perceivable, nor discoverable; and the flooring of the passage itself consisted of a single plank passing over depths of machinery, while on one side, was the grave trap made use of in "Hamlet," into which a single false step would have precipitated me to perish, perhaps. Over my head was the general stage; over that, another—a false stage, laid down to prevent the shoes of the horses from cutting up the boards of the

lower one; consequently, although I called out as loudly as I could, and beat a ladder against some of the fittings, no one heard me, any more than as if I had been dead and buried, and called for help from a filled up grave. A rope, which I luckily found suspended from above, was all I had to depend on to keep me from slipping off the swinging plank into the equally dark abyss below. The silence was something awful; but what was more awful still to *me*, was, I had told my wife I should return in an hour. She was in very precarious health; and would be in a state of great nervous excitement at my non arrival, as I always did, punctually, as I said, I could not answer for the result. And who was to say what had become of me? The probability, too, was, that I should be compelled to remain alone in the dark till the following Monday night, when the man would come to light the gas.

To some this may appear a ludicrous position; to me it was one of the most intense distress and apprehension; for an

hour, I sat down on an old box, wretched beyond description. I did not dare to go beyond the limit of the rope; I called to mind an incident, anything but cheering, of poor Auld, a stage manager of my early time, an excellent person, who, being in a theatre, I forget where, passing from the gallery to regain the stage, in the dark, by a plank as he supposed, which *should have been* there, but had been taken up, fell into the deep stone passage below, and was found *dashed* to *death* hours, if not days after.

I knew not what to do; I pictured the trouble at home, the despair of my poor invalid wife, my daughter. A night and a day absent, I that had never kept from them a single hour; they did not know where to find me. I felt as if I should lose my senses; the darkness, too seemed as if I could feel it. In this moment of my trouble I accused myself of *entering* a theatre on a *Sunday*; I will not say that I did not admit very serious thoughts to reprove my

heart; I will not say that I did not feel a moisture in my eyes, it was, perhaps, very unmanly to allow it, but, remember, it was not for myself I suffered. At length I resolved to submit, and was silent, a dreary interval; a light noise now reached my ears, a soft velvety touch, pit pat! It was the footstep of one of the cats of the theatre, (there are many kept in those large theatres, on account of the numerous rats, which, else, would infest the machinery,) a sudden thought flashed across my mind, now, almost desperate, that the slight noise of footsteps sounded in retreat, and directed me the way I ought to follow, I obeyed the impulse, scarce knowing what I did, puss was a true pilot, in half a minute I was once more, in the blessed daylight, which never seemed to me so bright before. On passing through the hall, I enquired of the porter, if he had not heard me cry out. His reply was, "Well, I did hear a *something*—but, being *Sunday*, I *fell asleep!*"

My time was now pretty well occupied

in reading the numerous M.S.S. sent in for acceptation, with the strongest recommendations, some by the perfumed notes of aristocratic friends, and others by the authors themselves. The manager was promised golden harvests in their unfailing success, while I invariably found those modestly dumb on their own merits were generally those most deserving of consideration. But I must be allowed to give the reader two specimens, for which I received the most unwarrantable abuse for not recommending; the first seems to have been written by a foreigner, who evidently had never witnessed the scene he attempts to picture.

Scene VII.—Act I.

St. James's Park, in King William's Chateau in England, the people walkiny about, the ships sailing, and the swans swimming.

King. In this serene retreat, how beautiful it feel, to glide up and down *in* the water. That way, the city; this way, the *mountains*, &c., &c., &c.

Scene VIII.—Act I.

Inside of king's palace, with great sofas standing on which the court ladies are discovered, some playing the harp, while the great lords kiss the hand of the king, who is

seated in a chair of state, around which stand the esquires, jockies, and lackies of the court, handling *the* punch *&c., &c.*

Another Specimen—(Operatic).

Act I.—Scene I.

A large oak tree, wound about with honeysuckles, in the branches of which the lark is singing, and squirrels jumping. Celedina, with her shepherdess's crook in her hand, surrounded by a flock of lambkins, bleating, and looking in her face. Arcado, (her lover,) playing the bagpipes.*

Opening Air, by Celedina.

Bleat, bleat, bleat, ye pretty lambkins;
Listen to the *pibroch* sweet—
Skip, skip, skip, ye little lambkins,
Up, and gamble round my feet.

The lambkins all rise, and begin to skip and gamble, in a circle, round the tree, &c., &c.

There are but too many of such absurdities, of which it is impossible to be mistaken in one's judgment. But then there come other works, so *near* the mark, that it is with difficulty you can decide. When this was the case, judgment dwelt not on my opinion. A work may possess the finest poetry, the finest literary qualities, and yet

* In Arcadian days, there is no telling where the lark sang; but in our times, certainly, not in the branches of trees

from want of dramatic construction, be perfectly unsuited to the stage—"Irene," to wit. Construction, in one sense, is as great a gift as poetry; in fact, of the two, for the stage it is better to be deficient in poetry: however the unskilful may laugh, there is a poetry in *action* as well as *words*. As an example to young dramatic aspirants, I point out to them this simple fact, that "Macbeth," "Othello," and "Richard the Third," would act without language; from this very secret, that the immortal Shakspere was not only a great poet, but a still greater dramatist: that is to say, master of *construction*. Begin by reading them. At least, read them through first for the under current, the plot then minutely examine solely the action. I prophecy it will *much amaze you*.

It is but natural to suppose that experienced authors must be the best judges of the probable success of a play. A manager is too apt to consider what he calls money-drawing points; an actor too frequently

looks at his own individual part, which he extracts with the greatest skill, as minutely as a bee extracts the honey out of a carnation—and, according to his or her individual portion of the sweet, the piece seems good or *bad*. But an author judges by distribution, as a painter does by the arrangement of colour, and in his mind's eye can see the whole effect, whether it will at once produce a harmony. But sometimes, as "'tis not in mortal to command success," even the author is mistaken. While I was reader, with Mr. Anderson, at Drury Lane Theatre, I believe he thought me a little too fastidious on one occasion, and therefore resolved to bring out a tragedy without my being appointed to read it, at which I was heartily glad, because, as I have said in the course of the work, in my engagements with Mr. Bunn, and Mr. Osbaldiston, it was only my business to read the casualties sent in M.S.S. of untried, unknown authors, such as those from whose works I have recently quoted. Well, this tragedy

was read in the green-room. Every one clapped his hands, and of course every one said, (myself excepted,) that it would be a *tremendous hit.* And every one, the manager and myself excepted, had quitted the green-room. He stood with his back to me, looking at himself in the large glass which reaches from the ceiling to the carpet. He still wished to know my sentiments; had I not been waiting in the theatre, for Rodwell, with whom I was going to dine, at Brompton, I should have made my exit with, if not before the other listeners. The tragedy was finely written. Anderson, one of the best readers I ever listened to. At length, after a pause, drawing the ends of his long silk neckerchief into extremes *à la Chevalier.* "Well, Fitz," said he, good-naturedly, but satirically at the same time, "I haven't heard *your* opinion of the play."

"You have heard the opinion of others, sir, equally, nay, even more experienced than myself."

"They are all warmly in favour."

"All!"

"And you?"

"It is a beautifully written play!"

"Capital speeches!"

"Capital! The first three acts are—nothing can be better."

"And the fourth?" turning his face somewhat hastily round from the attractive glass, and gazing full at me.

"The fourth—I think it scarcely fair, under circumstances, when everybody has given you such a promising opinion, especially as in this case I was to stand *neuter*, to ask what I really do think on the subject. I hope you'll excuse me if I make no reply; the result will show."

"Of course, then, you think it will prove a failure. Now, as a matter of curiosity, I wish particularly to know your exact opinion."

"Well, then, since you press me so, I *do* think it will *fail*."

"Why," colouring, "you do not deny that it is beautifully written?"

"Certainly, so it is, and a fine play; but this play does not depend on language or construction: it is a piece of points, and there is a point in it which cannot be got over with the public."

"In the fourth act?"

"In the fourth act."

"What is it?"

"No; if I am right you'll *hear*—if I am wrong, I cannot be expected to forestall my own want of judgment."

Anderson laughed at me; he thought me very conceited, although it was only a business affair, and made his managerial exit. Doubtless the reader will think me very egotistical also, unless he can receive this as a *study*, as it is meant.

The upshot of the story is: the first three acts of the piece went with loud acclamations. You would have thought all secure; yet when it reached the point in the next act, general disapprobation burst forth at once, and this otherwise fine tragedy so approved by actors, was by the public universally condemned.

The point I speak of was *cowardly assassination!*

True it is, in "Julius Cæsar" we have the same thing; but that is not a base, dastardly act, it is a tyrant disposed of for the good of his country, *by* the country. In "Nitocris," *I* plead guilty to a similar experiment, where the boy stabs Mesphra, but that was ridding the earth of a *wretch*, not stabbing a defenceless man when his back was turned to the dagger's point. I write this, also, as an example. It shows the necessity of well studying how to bring to pass an untoward event. In this tragedy, I mean the tragedy which failed, it was not the assassination, but the dastardly manner in which it was perpetrated. As Mr. Yates said—"It is not only the blue fire, but where to light it." A man does not require to be a Greek scholar, or to have Horace at his finger's ends, to become a good dramatist, or to be a great judge of a drama, as regards in particular its actability. A person may even act on the stage fifty

years and know as little about this as a drunkard, drunk every day, knows the real taste of wine. The real taste of wine is a gift of nature, as much as the real knowledge of a good painting is a mental one. There is no accounting for such things. I have known the commonest men excellent judges of the probable success of a play. A tailor of the name of Godbee at the Adelphi Theatre was fatal in his predictions. At the Surrey Theatre, years ago, a manager, who used to call a piece of mine—"*That 'ere Vaverley**," was one of the best judges I ever met with. If he said a piece would *not* do,

"It was sure to die."

And, in those days, it was very difficult for men to judge by rehearsals; because, for instance, the stage-manager was something like an escaped lunatic, from whose frantic actions, every one stood cautiously aloof, as if afraid he should bite. I have seen a stage-manager in his extreme energy, wear two beavers up, that is to say, knock out the

* Waverley.

crowns of two new hats, (in those days, hats were much dearer than now) and then beat his head against the side scene. All this intended to give a strong idea of the high importance of the piece, which importance you were bound modestly to suppose was encreased by the every-day increasing fury of the getter-up. Then I have seen at another theatre—a theatre royal—the stage-manager assume melancholy madness, and walk about like a condemned felon muttering his last prayers the morning of his execution, with a deep groan at every step, and his eyes turning green, like a cat's in the dark, as if he were the greatest, but most injured person in the world—a second Ixion bound through the jealousy of Jupiter, to the wheel of stupidity. The best managers that I ever did rehearse with, were the *Farrens;* with them, all was bland, good nature; no disgusting assumption or affectation, but friendly and gentlemanly. If an author offered an opinion, rudeness was quite out of the question. Mr. Creswick, also, with

whom I but recently rehearsed, is a most gentlemanly stage-manager, and endowed with the greatest pretentions to the art; and no mean merit it is to make that which *is* art, resemble *nature*. A man to be a good stage-manager, should be like a general in an army, who, if he is a good general, does not commence his manœuvres by kicking a hole in the drum to show the soldiers how he can kick; such a general is very likely to want the drum to sound a sudden retreat. A stage-manager should resemble the father of a family; it is not necessary for him to run about the stage like the muleteer in the "Rose of Castille" cracking a long whip to the terror of every one's legs and eyes. But these things are now, I rejoice to say, *much* improved. And here, again, for courtesy, mingled with common sense, we owe much gratitude to our French allies. To unsophisticated minds, what I have here written, may seem strange; but there are many, like myself, who have been doomed to

witness such circumstances, and laughed like me aside, with pity and contempt.

From this commentary on stage-managers, I shall relate a story of the unsophisticatedness of certain people on the subject of stage representations. This morning, I met a gentleman who, a member of the Princess's Theatre, told a story about an old woman who sells oranges in the Hampstead Road. He frequently dealt with her as he went to and fro, living at Camden Town, and learning that he was a member of the theatrical profession, when his benefit came on, the grateful old creature put up in a raffle, for tickets, and, having won a passport to the gallery, arrived in time to secure a front place; perhaps, both for seeing and hearing, the best place in the house. The play was "Henry the Eighth." Queen Katherine, Mrs. Charles Kean. Now, we must change the scene back again to Hampstead Road, and the patroness of the benefit safely *installed* at her *stall* again. A lapse of some

days having occurred, Mr. C. *en passant*, walks up to his patroness of the oranges to purchase a few of the golden fruit. The patroness had evidently something struggling in her mind to say; and, rubbing up one of the oranges, not only to render the object of sale as glossy as possible, but to delay time before she could muster courage to express her deep feelings. At length she exclaimed with heartfelt curiosity and anxiety, speaking in Irish of Queen Katherine, "pray sir, *could* you be plased to inform me if that *owld* lady is dead yet?"

Mr. and Mrs. Keeley being at this period managers at the Lyceum, I had the pleasure to write for them one of my prettiest, at least, one of my most successful dramas:

The Momentous Question.

I had frequently admired that charming print, so domestically beautiful, but could not learn from whence the subject had been selected; at length I discovered, and procuring the poem, immediately set to work about the drama. My first idea was to

produce it at the Haymarket; I spoke to Buckstone, (not then manager of that theatre). He liked the idea of the drama, and promised to mention it to Mr. Webster, then manager; in the interim, however, I met Mr. Keeley in King Street, Covent Garden, to whom I named the existence of this aforesaid "Momentous Question." He seemed still more struck with the story, requesting me to return home, and bring back my piece, along with me, to the theatre, which I did in a few hours; it was not only attentively read, but accepted for immediate production. On my way home I met Buckstone, on the very spot where I had met Keeley; he had kept his word honestly; Webster wished to peruse the M.S., but it was already too late; I hoped that Mrs. Keeley would take a fancy to the part of Rachael, but she did not, and

Miss Fortesque,

a capital actress, very handsome, the image of the Rachael in the picture, was deputed to the part, which she played

admirably; then I had my friend of the past, Frederick Vining, and Mr. Diddear, uncle to Helen Faucit, who made quite a legitimate piece of acting of the gamekeeper. Collier was Union Jack, and Mrs. A Wigan, Fanny. I always liked this domestic drama, there is a sweet interest in the story, so natural, so unaffected; I have no doubt Crabb founded it on actual *truth*. It has been acted everywhere, and is everywhere a favourite. It is somewhat remarkable that a person exceedingly prejudiced against me, as a writer, took quite a different turn towards me, from accidentally witnessing this simple piece, at the Surrey Theatre; and there are few good actresses on the stage, I am proud to say, who have not at one time or other, played Rachael, in the "*Momentous Question.*"*

The great success I met with, as a libretto writer, brought many applicants for books;

* The original painting on this subject, by Miss Setchel, was purchased by Her Majesty, as a present for His Royal Highness, Prince Albert, who was much struck with its domestic beauty, at the exhibition.

I wrote one for Mr. Westrop, Mr. Coote, Mr. McCarroll of Brighton, another for Montgomery, some of which may probably, I hope, for the composers, see the light before or shortly after these pages; amongst the rest, who applied to me, through my friend, H. St. Ledger Esq., (an Irish gentleman of *great taste*, especially in matters of music,) since fully known to the public, was

Vincent Wallace.

At our first interview, I did not acquiesce, although out of no sort of disrespect, either to him or his talent, because he was like his talent, an entire stranger to me. He was, however, a magnificent pianist, and happening to hear him play, I was so struck with his performance, that I speedily resolved to write some words to a splendid piece, of his composition, which has since become so excessively popular, under the somewhat romantic title of

The Harp in the Air.

This was our commencement, from which,

piece by piece, we concluded his universally admired opera of

Maritana.

I was the first to mention the great merits of this opera to Mr. Bunn, but he invariably turned a deaf ear to my commendations, not on account of the music, of which he knew nothing, but because he imagined that "Don Cæzar de Bazan" was a hacknied and worn-out subject. At length it so happened that Mr. Wallace gave one of his splendid performances on the piano, (he could play the violin equally well,) at the Hanover Square Rooms, (probably some compositions of his own,) when Sir Henry Webb heard, and spoke of him with great admiration, to our manager. Mr. Bunn immediately enquired of me, if this was the same Wallace I had so frequently mentioned with so much enthusiasm, and finding it was, now requested to read the libretto which hitherto he had refused to look at. I took it to him on a Saturday—he lived very near to me at the time, in

Fitzroy Square, but had a beautiful country retreat at West Drayton, to which place he carried the M.S., read it in the interim, and sent for me on the Monday morning, having returned to town.

He was pleased to be somewhat facetious on the subject, and enquired whether I had written the book of "Maritana," "If not," I answered, "I am unacquainted with the author." I was somewhat apprehensive of what would come next; but he continued, in his usually off-hand, but kind manner, "well, if the *fellow* who has composed the music, is as clever as the *fellow* who wrote the book, then all I have to say is, you are two clever *fellows* together; the words are capital, and do you the greatest credit."

The blood rushed to my head, egotistical as I may appear to the reader, in the writing of these pages, being so frequently *compelled* to resort to the first personal pronoun, I am *really*, and not ashamed to own it, a very diffident and retiring person, as regards my own merits. If the manager had found

some sort of fault, I should have had more courage, but he had only praise to offer, and my stammering reply was, "For myself, sir, I thank you, but this Mr. Wallace is a *much, much* cleverer *fc'o* than your humble servant." (I would not vouch that the reply to this was not that he required no more of my affectation,) and the best way will be, this very evening to bring Mr. Wallace, that you may hear some of the music, which I, like Sir Henry Webb, think so charmingly astonishing. In the evening Wallace went with me to Fitzroy Square, played over his opera; everybody, as I expected, was delighted, and the work accepted for immediate representation. But it should be told to the inexperienced, that a new grand opera does not come out quite so rapidly as I have related these details. Rehearsal after rehearsal has to take place, and many are the heartburnings for more than one of the party concerned, before the public ear listens to the harmony produced in the conclusion. In due time, however, the grand

original opera of "Maritana," was produced with unequivocal success, and ran a nearly uninterrupted course of a whole season. Mr. Bunn himself, wrote the words of two beautiful songs, "In happy moments," and "Scenes that are brightest," (since so popular.) My pieces were, "It was a Knight," "Turn on, old Time, thine hour-glass,"—"Hark! those chimes!" and "There is a flower that bloometh!" This opera stood little indebted, either to scenic aid, or that of costume; the more especially to the former, as we had but one new scene, a drop, which was inevitable; therefore, its own musical merits, assisted by the exertions of the singers, Mr. W. Harrison, H. Phillips, Miss Romer, and Miss Poole, won for it a celebrity which I have not the slightest doubt, will carry down its great reputation to a long posterity.

Some time after this, by one of those extraordinary metamorphoses which attend managers and managements, I find Mr. Bunn has abdicated his throne at Drury

Lane, and mounted the rostrum at the Surrey. This was a great mistake; although Elliston had certainly tried the same manœuvre with effect: but Elliston met with an *immensity* of good luck in becoming acquainted with Douglas Jerrold's "Black Eyed Susan."

Mr. Bunn, the best manager in my time at Drury Lane, was as much out of his element at the Surrey as a mouse would be in an aquarium. I never felt that it was beneath Elliston; somehow he could make himself Mr. Elliston anywhere, and he was *very grand*, too: but Mr. Bunn was not Mr. Bunn at the Surrey, and it was infinitely beneath *him*.

This sort of logic seems very contradictory. All I can say is, it *was* so. Elliston used to remind me of Cincinnatus at his plough: Bunn of some high-minded Baron banished to Siberia; in short, he was quite out of his position, and I'm sure he felt so. How Elliston endured it is marvellous: how Bunn did *not* endure it, is not at all marvel-

lous. If "Black Eyed Susan" had left a black eyed sister behind her, with equal attractions, it might have been more consolatory. But the company was operatic. I quite forget what were the pieces produced, except the "Bohemian Girl." It was there, and under that management, I brought out the

Daughter of the Regiment,

from which little was anticipated, although a happy result occurred. Miss Poole delighted the Surreyites, and the opera ran a long succession of nights; then, by way of a drawer-up, I gave them a touch of *blue fire* in

The Traveller's Room,

with droll little Oxberry, who pleased mightily; but there is an old adage, which says that you cannot serve God and Mammon, so, somehow, the operatics and the melodramatics don't couple well together, and though "The Traveller's Room" was very well furnished, the travellers somehow did not bring their carpet bags. Nevertheless,

after Mr. Bunn relinquished the sceptre, and Miss Romer came to be manageress of the Surrey, with opera, I wrote there a melodrame suggested to me by Wm. West, called

Alice May,

which ran more than sixty nights. But I should say the *first-rate* acting of Mr. Mead had an immense deal to do with its success. Mr. Widdicombe—the mirth-convulsing Widdicombe—as a Policeman, (a conceited Policeman is a sure card); Miss Coveney, as Alice May; and her sprightly sister in a comic part. This piece was afterwards produced at the Marylebone, by Mr. E. L. Smith, (now Manager of Drury Lane,) for whom I had written a melodrame—"Hans Von Stein; or, the Robber Knight." This was my first introduction to *that* gentleman, of whom I shall have hereafter much to say. "Alice May" was also brought out by Mr. Conquest at the Eagle, and ran upwards of sixty nights more. It has been played everywhere, and translated

into *French*. It really seems quite ridiculous, like Lopez de Vega, who could write a piece before breakfast, the numbers of plays, farces, melodrames, operas, &c., &c., that I have inflicted on the good nature of the public; I have not done yet. It was somewhere about this period that I lost, I *deplore* to say, the entire friendship and good opinion of my hitherto kind old manager, Mr. Bunn; and that, like a dream which dissolves in an instant; by a circumstance equally singular.

It was on the occasion of that remarkable trial about Mademoiselle Jenny Lind, for breach of contract to sing for Mr. Bunn at Drury Lane. One morning, so early as, I think, between seven and eight o'clock, Mr. Bunn came for me in his carriage, (I suppose I was served with the subpœna at the same time, I can't recollect,) and hurried me to the court as a witness in this case. On what subject I was going to be questioned, or what reply I was to make, was as much a mystery to me as the name

of the builder of the first pyramid. However, there stood I, as nervous as a sensitive plant, in the witness box. The question put to me was—"At what time of the year did the manager hand over to you a M.S., 'The Camp of Silesia,' to translate for Mademoiselle Jenny Lind to appear in?"

Now I appeal to any Reader, of any theatre, so abruptly brought into a court, and who has, perhaps, been given six or seven M.S.S. in a day, whether, without some previous notice, or, some reference to memoranda, he could, possibly, have charged his recollection so far as to answer this question at once? I could not; and therefore simply replied—"I believed it was at West Drayton, in the *summer*."

"Why the *summer*?"

"I recollected the flowers were in bloom."

This caused a smile from more than one. It was in the *winter* the circumstance occurred.

"Who gave you the M.S.?"

"Mr. Bunn."

QUESTIONER, *(facetiously questioning my poetical tendency.)*—"Now, Mr. Fitzball, don't you think it was the Flying Dutchman?"

REPLY, *(simply.)*—"I *don't* think that Mr. Bunn looks much like the *Flying* Dutchman."

(Roars of laughter in the court, the Questioner and the Judge laughing as immoderately as the rest.)

Yet would it be believed that I had not the remotest idea of saying anything *comical.* In my mind's eye I beheld my *transparent* Vanderdecken looking over the bow of his *phantom* ship, and could not think it possible to mistake *any* mortal, opaque form for his. As a proof that my conception of the etherial composition of Vanderdecken was not altogether an outrage, Madame Celeste, who has recently enacted the part many nights at the Adelphi, dresses it in a light gauzy drapery over her costume to give it the effect of a *spiritual* resemblance. Not but what the mind is capable

of conceiving the etheriality of a spirit without any occular demonstration.

The Attorney-General, I believe it was, dismissed me with a very polite bow, and gladly did I escape.

Mr. Bunn gained a verdict of *several thousand pounds*, and wrote me that evening a *very* angry letter, accusing me of ridiculing him, of which I felt very unconscious, and expressing towards me a contempt and indignation of which I still feel utterly undeserving. But I hope long ere this—I have not seen him for years—that my generous old friend has discovered the impossibility of my ever wishing to detract from his dignity, or to act contrary to his interest. Let him reasonably ask himself what could have been my motive—what my recompense. To despise myself, if I could in heart or desire have felt anything but grateful esteem and kindest remembrances to the writer of the following letter, which just shows the trust and confidence he then placed in me—

"My Dear Fitzball,—

"I cannot get away from Palace duty "without incurring Royal displeasure: it "being the birthday!* Like a good fellow, "take my place and issue your *own* directions "as to any and all stage business. I will "try to get to Drury Lane by half-past two "or three. Get any private box, and write "whatever orders you like.

"Yours very truly,

"A. Bunn.

"Thursday morning."

His angry letter filled me with the deepest distress at the time; but, alas! alas! the *real* tale of woe which it is my sad lot now to record has *almost* changed my nature, and taught me to look upon every former ill in this transitory world with a very philosophic eye.

I speak of the blight which fell upon my

* Mr. Bunn was at this time one of the Gentlemen-at-Arms. As a manager, Mr. Bunn's place has not yet been supplied. He was the greatest friend to operatic people that ever yet came on the English stage: liberal, a poet, and a gentleman.

remaining existence—the loss of my faithful, affectionate partner through thirty years of excitement and anxiety—the death of my *dear wife.*

Let us return to the little rose garden in the old Close in Norwich; let us glance up again at the window where that young girl is working in gold beads her satin slipper by the stilly light of the evening; let us look down into the carnation beds below, at the young heart beating there, and the fond, watchful eyes of early, untold love: and then fly away through the lapse of years to this sad page of our eventful narrative, and reflect—to this complection we all must come at last. *What is the world?* A dream!

There was a drama produced at Drury Lane called the "Passing Shadow," (Bernard.) It was under Mr. Anderson's management. I was reader still, and it was my duty to witness the first night's performance of every novelty, and report my opinion to the manager next morning. My

wife had not been so well as usual during the last two days; but her illness having continued on and off now for *twelve years*, I had got rather accustomed to it, as you may suppose, and like one long used to a gathering storm, did not see the nearer approach of the clouds. Still, that night in particular, I did not, as usual, go round to speak to the manager, but impelled by some involuntary emotion, hurried home to George Street, at the end of Gower Street, where I then resided. The rain fell as I proceeded, not in a shower, but in solitary drops, as if the angels wept. God knows, for He alone knows all hearts, how much I was entitled to sympathy and pity in that melancholy hour.

On entering the drawing-room I was delighted to find my wife apparently *much better*. She had waited tea for me, and had dressed herself in a purple gown which I had given her as a present—purple being her favourite colour. She was alone, my daughter having recently been married, and

was living at some little distance with her husband. There were two what are called composite candles on the table, and while the tea was proceeding, and I was telling the interesting story of the "Passing Shadow," a cloud came over her brow, her eyes being fixed mournfully on the candles, from each of which projected what are called by the superstitious *winding-sheets*. I rose and made an attempt to brush them off, as if by accident.

"Oh," she said, sadly, "it is very kind of you to do that, but they are winding sheets for *me*."

I affected to turn the matter into ridicule, by observing, "I don't exactly know what you require two winding-sheets for; it seems there is one of them for me, and I beg you'll not be covetous; we shall *all* require such a tranquil garment when the time arrive."

"My time *has* arrived;" was the mournful reply, "Your's will not be yet—I have been a sad clog on your happiness and in-

terest, now, for years. When I am gone, you must not regret me too deeply, it is my *sincere* injunction. For myself, I only regret the separation; you have proved to me a patient, good, affectionate husband, and despite of all the trouble and anxiety we have gone through together, gladly would I undergo it all again, for your sake." These were her exact words. I was speechless, seeing her there, looking so pale and earnestly at me, and her voice thrilling through every fibre of my heart: tenderly solemn—affectionately dreadful! She was seated in a low chair which I had had made purposely for her, and placing her hands upon the arms to raise herself, seeing how agonized I appeared, she put on a forced smile, and said, in a soothing tone of voice, "Never mind what I have said; this, perhaps, may be only a *passing shadow*. I have sat up too late." I lighted the lamp, and hastily took up the plate basket, which I always made a habit of carrying every night into our bed-chamber. I stood waiting for her

to accompany me; she had *no longer the strength* to *rise*, every bodily faculty seemed exhausted, in this *last* effort to sit up for *me*, for the last time. I raised her in my arms, with the assistance of the servant, who came quickly. I lifted her into bed; from that bed, alas! she rose no more. Some few days passed, I never left her, scarcely an instant. The doctors, Doctors Pretty and Martyn, *said* she was dying; I could not believe it; other doctors had told me so twelve years ago—her last words were to console me—her eyes, when it was too much effort to speak, followed my footseps whichever way I turned. At length, she no longer saw me, nor heard me, nor pressed my hand; She was mercifully spared, by the *gracious* Omnipotent, her so dreaded pang of separation. Every faculty dropped, leaf by leaf, away; she was *no more;* she was in my arms, *dead.* Strange, incongruous as it may appear, the frightful conviction was not intense agony, as one might naturally have supposed; no!

It was a sort of relieved feeling—a relaxation of the tightened chords of suffering—or the overstrained heart must have burst at once. Such are the wonderful provisions of nature. I was relieved, that *she* had ceased to suffer. This lull over, and it was but too brief, my brain gave way; I was as insensible as she was, that I had lost now, in this world, for ever.

I too speedily returned to consciousness. They had put up a bed for me in the drawing-room; how I came in it, I knew not—I felt that I had been ill, and my first enquiry was for my faithful nurse, who always forgot all her own ailments in attending to mine—my *wife*; the look of distress, the tearful silence which ensued, told me over again the melancholy truth. Then I did *indeed suffer*, and I do here assert, that the dreary desolation of that little instant, indescribable by mortal pen, might amply have atoned for the past, had my life been ever so culpable. I was offended with my most excellent friend, Mr.

Gye, senr., (who was amongst the first to hurry to my consolation,) when he told me that time would restore me to myself; he had gone through all that I had suffered, indeed worse, and resignation had returned. I did not believe that resignation *could* return in this world to *me*, yet here I am, able to relate this sad story of misery, eight years after: consoled—resigned. But there is a sweet and beautiful hope undying in my heart, the hope of the promise of God, that we *shall* meet again shortly, in an enduring happiness, "Where the wicked cease from troubling—where the weary are at rest."

Let us now turn aside from this every-day, melancholy tale of mortality. I have now entered on a new part; I am a widower; and a very *singular* feeling that is, after having, from boyhood almost, had one heart in which to lock my troubles, or my joys—a *widower*. It has seemed to me, however, that although I have not been with her, in her invisible presence, as if some-

how she were always with me: my better genius—my watchful angel. Who knows? The *cherub aloft*—and although, since I lost her, I have not been so fortunate as hitherto, my spirits have not been crushed. I can be cheerful, even happy, especially in solitude, which, above all things, I enjoy.

Now to return to life. The first dramatic attempt I made, after these painful events, was of all things, that which seems most at variance with them, the opening of a *comic* Christmas pantomime,

Alonzo and Imogene,

for Mr. Charles Kean and Mr. Keeley. A deep debt of gratitude I owe those gentlemen, for their kindness in fixing upon my inventive powers, the mind diverting task of constructing *that* pantomime; it was the first thing which succeeded in restoring the tone of my overwhelmed mind, to itself, and to divert away the ruinous indifference with which I had began to regard the necessary and social pursuits of life.

If there be anything on earth more cal-

ıted to draw back the mind from a led melancholy, it is the rehearsal of a ıic Christmas pantomime. Where rything is composed of absurdity, and hing *real*, except the outlay, and as that y falls on the back of the manager, who ects, and generally is repaid twenty es the cost, nobody cares. Paint is bing, gilt is dabbing, fiddles scraping, lequin, (not in his patches and spangles,) ering, he keeps doing something very ıterious with his hands, moving them up down, and backwards and forwards, in ıanner perfectly unintelligeable to anyone himself, and the stage manager; and certain masonic looks, which they oc-onally exchange between each other, perceive that all's right, and the effect ıight, will be astounding, to the orange ters of Olympus, and the dear little s, home for the holidays. Those pre-ous cherubs do not wish it were holiday every day in the year, more than do Harlequin, and Mr. Flatcatch, the

manager. A *fatherly* man is Mr. Flatcatch, and fond he is of seeing the *rising* generation in his *lower* boxes, and their amiable p—as and ma—s—with their gran——pas and gran——mas also, enjoying the shrill little laughs of the sweet darlings, as Mathews used to say, who have got the money. Then we have columbine, in her *dish*abille, a somewhat soiled french hen sort of a muslin dress, and a still more soiled pair of once white satin slippers, in which she runs about on the tips of her toes, and spins round and round like a tetotum—then there is Tom Mathews, the clown, who always becomes a sort of inspired wit, a week before Christmas, as if he smelt plum pudding and hot codlins. And old Barnes, the noted pantaloon, without effort, practising a broken back; and last of all, not least in this vast catalogue, *them* fairies, some tatting, and more chatting, till, ever and anon, the anxious manager, with purple eyes, is making a great noise himself, calling out "silence *you fairies* in the pit."

Then, amid the crash of scenery, stubborn scenery that gets always proud at Christmas, and will not be rudely pushed about, and a dialogue carried on at the back, in parliamentary force, by another great man, most important in this affair, Mr. Sloman, master carpenter, and all the other carpenters, respecting dove-tailing, not meaning the silver doves who support Cupid in the forthcoming pantomime. Then begins the *hope*ning poetry, as to the hearing of which, there seems no *hope*, to the despair of the forlorn and very much *in-the-way* looking author. He wishes that he had the mystic bough of Robert the Devil, to *hish* all that made there, a noise, to sleep, and throws himself into an attituding, *à la* Byron, agony of delight, as Miss Louisa Abrahams, so far as *h* is concerned, not of a euphoneous school, speaks, disdainful of emphasis, the opening words of Titania, which the author's practised ear distinctly catches, however much other ears be deaf.

Titania.

Oh! my lov'd lord! before the rise of sun,
Shake *hoff* the dew, and let us *'ave* some fun—
The pinks, and *wiolets* are vide avake,
The *osses* in the pond their thirst do slake—
Little Red Riding Hood, with pot of butter,
Nought thinking of the wolf that's going to *eater*—
Is in the wood; see, where she crosses *hover*—
Hup, fairies, hup; and you in clouds that *hove-er*,
Descend on wings of *light*.

At this part of the invocation, a loud railway whistle rends the gaseous air, and a tremendous waving of a white flag, by the stern looking prompter, whose privilege it is never to smile, except when imposing a fine; at this signal some six or ten little victims, (*the fairies*,) fastened like the Chinese criminals, to a torture pole, descend in a somewhat straight attitude, their cramped legs hanging very stiff, to bamboozle the wolf, Mr. Muzzleby, who runs about wolfishly on all fours, below; the fairies, as yet, are without their *wings* of *light*, as they, the said wings, are in the property room, undergoing *sizing*, till which operation is gradually performed, the

etherial light will not stick on. There are many sticks during the rehearsal, as may naturally be apprehended; there are sticks in the tricks, sticks in the scenery, sticks in the orchestra, notwithstanding that great stick of all, the baton, and *many* sticks on the stage. At length the roguish wolf, despite of his artful dodge, I beg pardon, disguise, a red cloak, and large black bonnet, the of period of the Georges,—Thackery could tell us about it,—which appropriate costume decidedly fixes the date of fairy times, is turned into a fat clown, who, to remind you that he has still his wolfish propensities, steals everything he can lay his paws on, and swallows ravenously, paper pies, opera hats, cod fish, and, in short, everything he can cram down his voracious throat; while the poor, respectable old superanuated pantaloon, is kicked and cuffed, and lifted up by the small of his back, to the risible convulsions of lookers on, till you would think he had no backbone left. Harlequin and Columbine, *pas de*

deux, capering in, and out of farm-yards, without soiling their white tips, Thames Tunnels, and all sorts of impossible places, till at last they arrive in due time, at the Temple of *Invisible Love*, where a maypole shoots up a rose, in the likeness of a large red cabbage; then this cabbage-rose, expanding, shoots forth a hundred and more, strings of little cabbage-roses; and a bevy of fat girls, smiling with all their might, are pushed up, and hung up, on lilies, which are now fated to bear heavy loads, and very frequently to reel, and spin also, quite contradicting the old moral, about "they toil not, neither do they spin." At this climax, up rushes a sort of volcano, with volcanic eruptions in his face, the firework maker, to take the blaze of the "gorgeous pantomime," all to himself, by setting fire to something in a sort of iron shovel, the much reviled blue fire, the light of other days, which they of the present, don't seem to be able to do without, though now, revelling in the more modern and transcen-

dent appellation of *Le feu d'artifice, illirium budei oxigensis*, which glorification nobody understands, not even the concocter; and this ends a night rehearsal of a grand comic pantomime, which no less astonishes ourselves, than our foreign allies as one of the original concoctions of the *barbarous isle*. Of "Alonzo and Imogene," little has to be said, except that Mr. Wynne personated, admirably, that famous heroine of Lewis, who would have been astonished had he seen the fair creation of his prolific brain, "seated on the green," then, swinging on a rope, between two trees, and pushed to and fro, by the lusty hand of her strenuous Alonzo, and blushing with maiden modesty, to the tips of her ponderous ear-drops, as sometimes the rude current of wind betrayed too much of the golden clocks of her silken hose. This Mr. Wynne was also a gentleman of great literary talent; author of many well-known popular works; son of Madame Sala, the celebrated singer; but died, poor fellow, very suddenly,

and very young, of that frightful calamity disease of the heart.

Of the "Last of the Fairies," founded on Mr. James's beautiful romance, and the "Miller of Derwent," I should here say nothing, except for two circumstances. In the latter I was first introduced to

Mr. Robson,

who played the doctor; I need not say as well as it could possibly be acted. Not knowing him, and never having seen him act, I took the liberty of suggesting several things which I wished to have done in performing this character, which he listened to with the modesty of an amateur, and religiously adopted. So it is with all men of *real* talent. A single scene at night was sufficient to stamp on my mind the genius of Robson. The great actor he has proved himself every playgoer knows. The second incident was this: the house being very full on the *first* night of the "Last of the Fairies," I could only have a seat in a pri-

vate box with two ladies—daughters of a bishop, as I was told. For the truth of that I will not vouch. However, it was not difficult to see, at a glance, they were gentlewomen, and as the play went on, they watched its progress with the greatest interest. At length the curtain fell amid loud applause, and, to my consternation, the *author was called for*. One of the ladies then enquired, with nervous curiosity, of me, if I could possibly tell her in what box the author would be likely to make his appearance. My reply was, rising to go—"That, from what I *felt*, he was not likely to make his appearance at all." At that moment Mr. Edward Murray, the treasurer, opened the door of the box, and said that Mr. Farren begged me to recognise the call, or it would be insulting the audience, who evidently knew I was present. I was then compelled to request the permission of the two ladies to allow me just to step between them, and make my bow; and I do not know which caused the greatest sensation in

my mind, the approbation of the public, or the astonished looks of the bishop's daughters.

It would be very unjust, as well as ungrateful, not to say a word or two here of Mr. Henry Farren, who played the Miller of Derwent most excellently, and to whom I am entirely indebted for the production of that play. Henry Farren, although sometimes a little too boisterous—a fault on the right side for so young a man—has in him all the germs and genius of a splendid actor, and *will* be one, if he only has the courage to imitate the example set by Mr. Charles Kean. He is now in America. I hope to see the day, and that soon, when he will return, mellowed by ripe experience, and tread in the flowery path which his father, also like Kean's, has trod so magnificently before him.

The publication of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," the deservedly popular production of Mrs. Stowe, set all the managers mad to produce it on the stage. Every theatre nearly pro-

duced its version. I don't know whose was the best. I was engaged by three managers to write three distinct pieces, which I did to the best of my abilities: indeed, it did not require any remarkable ability, as it was only to select scenes and join them together. My pieces were produced: one at the Olympic, for Mr. Farren; one at the Eagle, for Mr. Conquest; and one at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, for Mr. E. T. Smith. The crowd to witness the representation of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" at the latter house was so immense, that many accidents occurred from the pressure outside. In the theatre not a word was heard, from those who could not obtain seats stamping the rogues march, and kicking up the most appalling noises in the galleries.

Mr. James,

of the Queen's Theatre, (a very model for managers in courtesy and kindness,) after the run of the Drury Lane "Uncle Tom's Cabin," although he had already played a piece on the same subject, did me the honor

to revive mine at his theatre with the greatest care and attention; and being a first-rate artist, assisted by his equally talented son, painted some beautiful scenery himself, especially the Sea of Ice, which contributed immensely to the run of this piece on that once site of kingly residences, King John's Palace, for instance,—Tottenham *Court* Road, and other singularities of a theatrical kind in the environs, as for example, read a very old advertisement—

TOTTENHAM COURT FAIR.

In A. Lee and Woodward's *tiled* booth, near the Turnpike, during the fair will be presented "The Generous Freemason; or, the Constant Lady," including the "Humours of Squire Noodle:" to which will be added "Harlequin Sorcerer," &c., &c.

☞ Begin at ten in the morning and end at nine at night.

George Wild.

In the "Uncle Tom's Cabin" at Drury

Lane, I introduced the part of a Pedlar, which harmonised exceedingly well with the peculiar character of the play, for George Wild, and which he executed with a skill the world never gave him credit for. A capital actor was George Wild, in the style of *the* Mathews—I mean the *elder* Mathews. But there are people whose merits are entirely overlooked, be they what they may. There is not at this moment a better comic actor on the stage than George Wild was; he did not, like *many* others, blow his own trumpet; and I begin to think now, although I myself have never adopted the system, that part of the education of a boy who has his way to make in the wide world, should be to blow his own trumpet, like the mountebank outside the show. I see it practised with so much success every day, both in public and private, that the old-fashioned nonsensical line—

> On their own merits modest men are dumb,

is about as applicable to the *fast* genius of the present day, as a lumbering stage coach

would be to admonish the speed of a railway train. George Wild was the son of a pastrycook, and a most respectable one, in Tottenham Court Road. He went to see Mathews, and was stage-struck, unfortunately for himself and family. Of his early career I know little. My first interview with him was when he personally applied to me as manager of the Queen's Theatre in Tottenham Court Road, to write him a melodrame. I was too occupied to write a new one, and he brought out my "Deserted Mill." Again, I found him at the Marylebone Theatre, next at Drury Lane, with Mr. Smith, who was very much attached to him. Everywhere he succeeded, but nobody made a fuss about him, because he made no fuss about himself. As a manager, he sustained great losses, which losses, I fear, produced the most unfortunate result to the well-doing of his family. The last time I saw him was near the great entrance of Drury Lane Theatre. The theatre was about to close with the conclusion

of the season. I inquired of him how he was likely to be engaged during the recess. His reply was a remarkable one: "There are still six nights to play, which will fill up *my* time." This being uttered in his off-hand, reckless manner, I thought little about it, till Mr. Smith himself came into the vestibule of the theatre, where I happened to be a very short time after, talking with Mr. Chatterton, the box-bookkeeper, and told us that poor George Wild was *dead*. Of course he was ill at the period he spoke to me; but, like Mercutio, his animal spirits were so great, he would not resign himself to believe that he was seriously ill, or to let others think so. Such things are. Shakspeare seems to have known everything. Can we marvel, in reading this sad result, if staid fathers have a natural horror at the idea of their children taking to the stage. The domestic home, the domestic hearth, the respectability of years, all was wrecked in the outshoot of George Wild from the avocation of his forefathers. Yet all this

is not to be attributed to the defalcations of the stage. A man of ever such abilities, let him be *whatever* profession he may, if weak enough to be addicted to low company, is sure to sink at last, and, in falling, crush those who love *him* best, and whom *he* loves best. This happens every day, in the church as well as on the stage. I knew a fatal instance of it in my own family. This fatal propensity is a *curse*, which, like the Indian weed, creeps over a whole house, and eventually pulls down the house along with it.

Mr. Betty, Junr.,

son of the once celebrated Young Roscius, played the part of George in "Tom's Cabin," with much care and attention; but his powers are far beyond such trifling characters. In Hamlet or Virginius he would have had greater scope for his abilities and his powerful voice. Who, of the early part of the century, does not recollect his father, Master Betty, whose acting put all England into one excitement. The theatre was opened in the day time, so universal was

the curiosity to witness the performance of that wonderful boy. I saw him not long ago in Leicester Square, advanced in years, his hair like untrodden snow, but still handsome and dignified as ever; and so

The sands of life run on.

Mr. Anderson.

But I have, somehow, omitted a circumstance which occurred during my engagement with Mr. Anderson, when he was lessee of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane. Never did I see any manager seat himself on the theatrical throne with better pretensions than Mr. Anderson: he was an excellent actor of the Macready school, a very fine man, in the prime of his youth, with a thorough knowledge of the stage and its appurtenances. I really cannot, even at this distance of time, after so much space for reflection, imagine why that gentleman so strenuously wished to engage me; yet that he was most anxious for my enlistment under his banner, is clear, by a letter wherein he facetiously tells me my toast, if

I accept the engagement, shall be "*buttered on both sides.*" Under such substantial expressions who could have resisted? I was *again* reader at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, for which I relinquished a similar offer at the rival theatre, Covent Garden. Well, all went on swimmingly for a time; I had only to read brainracking M.S.S., as hitherto, and sit like an owl in a cobwebby corner of the theatre, cogitating over incomprehensibilities. Hamlet, and his Father's Ghost, walked their nightly rounds; Macbeth and his ambitious lady twirled their bloody daggers; and the "Elder and Younger Brothers" disputed their right of heirship in succession. Then I believe we had "Fiesco," which proved a *fiasco*, and an operatic piece, gloriated by the title of the "Cricket Match," which proved anything but a *hit*, and would not have succeeded even at *Batty*'s. Things began to decline, and money to flow out of the managerial treasury, to very little purpose. At length came the startling phrase,

which, if ever I keep a carriage, (a poetical license,) I shall adopt as a motto

"*York, you're wanted.*"

Mr. Anderson said to me, *you* who have made so many strange hits for other people, why can't you make one for me? I was not engaged as a writer, but as reader, consequently, not bound to undertake the former duty. Still, as our mighty barque was in a perilous position, I was not the man not to stretch out my grasp to the hand in distress held above the water.

Outside the theatre, I met an old and trusty ally of mine, Mons. Laurent, a gentleman who knew everything. I enquired of him if he could tell me of any subject, whereby to save a falling state. He told me that there was an opera playing in Paris which, though not crowned with the most unanimous success there, he thought, as a melodrame, I could make something of. It was called—

L'Enfant Prodigue, viz., Azaël.

What is it they say about a nod being as good as a wink? On my way home, I

looked in at Jeff's, the French publisher, in Burlington Arcade, who quickly put me in possession of the "Prodigal Son," "L'Enfant Prodigue," that is to say, Azael; and, in a very brief space from that time, my friend, Anderson, was in full possession of my M.S., not a translation, although founded on the French piece—which French piece, by the way at the Opera, in the Haymarket, proved quite a failure. Added to which knowledge I had the consoling gratification of being told by an old croaking veteran actor in the Theatre, that *no* Egyptian piece had *ever* yet answered on the English stage. If that be a correct statement, then I have written the *only* successfull Egyptian drama of this country, and blow my own trumpet accordingly.

Things inside the camp were in too desperate a state to stand shilly shally; dresses were making; scenes painting; the manager sword in hand, ready to take all London by surprise, when his energies received a considerable damp by the inertia of his forces.

It was not one person in the piece grumbled at his, or her part, but *all* and *every one* of them, the manager himself, who was to play the Prodigal Son, each judging by his own part, predicted nothing but failure, except Fanny Vining. I am quite sure that any individual, not a theatrical, judging only by *his own part*, would pity an author placed in such a position. I felt that this Azael would make a hit nevertheless, and for my *own credit sake*, wished anxiously to bring it out; my former victories did not seem to give me the slightest influence; I was scarcely listened to. So much for a captain of forces, whatever he *has* done, all goes for nothing, if a repulse is apprehended only at the next attack. My old friend Vandenhoff, compared his part with the Jew, in the "Jewess," and I honestly confess that I do not feel disposed to gratify friend Planché, by the effect of that mortifying comparison. Then a principal actress assailed me with giving *her* a part little better than Millwood. I always succeeded best

with the tender hearts of the ladies, and humbly enquired of the lady in question, "Then you do think it a *better* part than Millwood?"

"Well certainly, but not much!" sneeringly.

I continued, quietly, "A *great* actress played Millwood. I never had the happiness to see her act; but I have heard her name *mentioned*; it was *Sarah Siddons*."

"Mrs. Siddons play Millwood?"

"Certainly, and this, *you* admit, is a better part."

The prompter's boy called the lady, and I heard of no more dissatisfaction.

Then there were two other *gentlemen* cast two parts, in their *own estimation* quite unworthy of *their* superior talents. These two great favourites of the public, going out of the theatre after the reading, met Mr. Wilmot, who had been prompter in the theatre, in Mr. Macready's time, but retired, (independent). Wilmot was an oracle in the theatre, and deserved to be so. For

a clear-headed, honest opinion, he had not his equal.

Conversation.

Wilmot. "Well what's going on inside?"

Gents. "New piece read; such a piece; not one tidy part."

Wil. "Good! then you can't quarrel about which shall get the best."

Gents. "Ugh! We shall throw our parts up, we've left them on the table." (Scornfully.)

Wil. "Indeed! what's the name of the piece?"

Gents. "Ridiculous; 'The Prodigal Son!'"

Wil. "'The Prodigal Son?' Is it possible the license has been gained for *such* a title?"

Gents. "Oh yes!" (American imitation.)

Wil. "Then there must be *something* extraordinary in the piece. Who's the author?"

Gent. "Oh! Fitzball!"—*depreciatingly.*

Wil. "Fitzball! ah! now I understand —he knows *well* what he's about, this

proves it; added to which, I always think there's a luck about him. My dear *friends* this piece will prove a *tremendous hit*, take *my* word for it; go back at once, recover possession of your parts from the table, and set about studying them as fast as possible."

Wilmot was quite right in his prognostication; the piece, *when* produced, did make a decided hit, ran an immense number of nights; and but for the termination of Mr. Anderson's engagement, would have run another hundred, with the greatest ease, and have brought many thousands. I relate all these circumstances for the encouragement of younger dramatists, who, in my *peculiar line*, may come after me. Courage!

"The Prodigal Son" is a charming and interesting story, attached to which, it has a sweet religious tendency and one of the finest morals on the stage. These were its exquisite points, scarcely perceivable, if taken in *parts*, but looked on as a whole, a perfect harmony. Anderson played Azael; *inspired*, as it were, to the attempt. Miss

Fanny Vining, (who never complained, under all circumstances the wisest policy. A great actor can make *something* of a *little*; but your grumblers, I have invariably found, make *very little* of *much*,) as the Jew's daughter, left nothing to be wished for; neither did Vandenhoff, who was afterwards complimented by poetical effusions in the papers, which he showed me himself. Eventually, *religious* people of almost all denominations came to witness this spectacle, and I am quite sure, from the general burst of tears, into which I have seen, over and over again, the house dissolve at its conclusion, that if religious pieces were allowed to be produced *by proper people*, at *proper* seasons, in this country, it would do more to soften humanity, than all the lectures that the finest orator ever yet poured forth from the rostrum.*

* William Fitzstephen, in his *Descriptio noblissimæ Civitatis Londinæ*, says, London instead of common interludes has plays of a more holy subject, representing those miracles which the holy confessors wrought, or of the sufferings wherein the glorious constancy of the martyrs

Sir Henry Bishop.

My old and valued friend to the *last*, for his son told me that he spoke of me with enthusiasm, in his dying moments. Sir Henry Bishop paid the great debt of nature, and although, of late years, illness and circumstances had kept us much apart, the last time he was at our house, he came to give away my daughter on her wedding day, and made a very elegant and impressive speech. A wedding day, in my mind, to those who are most interested, is anything but a festive day, a day of smiles certainly, but a day also of *real* tears. Singular enough, the next time I visited Sir Henry's house, was to be present at the marriage of his daughter. I don't recollect ever speaking to him on any occasion after *that*. I was once present when he directed some concert given in the St James's Theatre; the perceptible change which had come over him, was painful to

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did appear. This author was a monk, residing at Canterbury, in the reign of Henry the II., and died in the reign of Richard I., 1191.

witness; it was evident that he was suffering greatly, from some bodily infirmity, which proved to be the case, and very shortly after he was no more. Bishop was princely, as he was dreamy in his ideas. Of expense he seemed to have no calculation, and foresaw no calamity till it fell upon him. What the English world of music owes Bishop, is scarcely to be understood, much more appreciated, in these advanced days of the divine art. Choristers that performed in cathedrals and churches, principally in oratorios and sacred compositions, at grand festivals, Handel, Haydn, and so forth, neither could, nor would have been induced formerly to sing upon the stage. Bishop had no Hullah to render him assistance, consequently, in the early operas, which he introduced to the British public, chorusses of all kinds were omitted, and not unfrequently, the tenor part itself, played by a speaker. Count Almaviva to wit, occasionally called his brother, or cousin, from the side scene to sing for him, the music which, to him,

was all Greek. Such were the barbarisms of those Pagan days, with which Bishop had for years to contend. His opera, the "Circassian Bride," was particularly unlucky; a few nights before it was to have been produced, the theatre was burnt down, and the scenes and the whole of the music consumed in the flames.* His turn of mind was most tasteful, his conversation elegant and refined; there was always something to gain, and nothing to lose, in the society of Sir Henry Bishop. I confess here, with the deepest gratitude, that to his advice and suggestion, never obtrusive, I owe many eradications of my early faults and provincialities. Many know how to correct an error; but very few, how to do so without more or less wounding the feelings. This was one of the great gifts of Sir Henry Bishop.

* When Handel produced his "Acis and Galatea," at the Haymarket, in 1732. Acis was played by Mr. Mountain, *first time* of his appearance *on any stage*. Galatea, Mrs. Arne, afterwards Mrs. Cibber, the chorus taking *nearly a year* to be rendered perfect.

George Rodwell

his pupil, also died nearly the same time. Speaking of advice, when I first became acquainted with Rodwell, he had the cockney way of leaving out the letter *h* in horse. I often felt inclined to correct this bad habit, so common in London, so annoying to ears not accustomed to the sound, at the same time anything but aristocratic; still, with the conviction of Gil Blas' candid opinion on the sermon of his master, for which, though urged to give it, he got kicked out of the house, I feared I might lose my friend if I attempted anything like a correction, consequently, I remained mute. I was mistaken in my reckoning, however, for some other person, Bishop, doubtless, did advise Rodwell to correct this vulgarism, and Rodwell never failed on all occasions to reproach me for what was actually timidity. I sustained a *really* great loss in the death of these two intellectual men—a loss which I shall never cease to regret—a chasm which time cannot fill up.

Who would remain in this wide world alone,
When all the heart treasured is faded and gone?

Of a sanguine and outwardly lively spirit was George Rodwell, you would have thought inexhaustible. But alone he was quite the reverse—restless, and disposed to melancholy. Many is the time that I, who am never disposed, nor never was disposed to excited over-joyousness, have exerted all my efforts to brighten up his spirits. His first compositions for me were the songs in the "Bottle Imp." "Ye bright and glittering palaces," "They mourn me dead in my father's halls," &c. Neither he nor Bishop left behind them the baton of Scazziani.*

* Valerio Scazziani was a musician in Venice during the terrible time of the Inquisition, but, being a pious and sober, as well as an industrious man, he never got into the slightest trouble with the state, and, therefore, was never placed in the dark, cold dungeons of St. Mark, nor under the scorching tiles for any offence whatever. His idol was music, in the pursnit of which he became popular. There was no concert nor performance of music, however sacred, that would have been considered complete, unless directed by the almost magical baton of Valerio Scazziani. Consequently, as Scazziani was saving, he became eventually rich. But Scazziani had a graceless, *only* son, who was a

At the conclusion of Anderson's season, "Azael" had run every night from the

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libertine and a spendthrift, without industry, and without a thought or care from whence the money came, so long as he could drink, revel, and treat his gay companions, idle as himself, with flasks of Scyros wine. At length the elder Scazziani had nearly executed the most difficult passage of all—that of life—when calling his dissolute heir to his bedside—"My dear boy," he said, in a feeble voice, "I leave you my house, and the noble furniture which I have from time to time scraped together. There are some valuable paintings, too, given me by my friends Titian and Tintoretto; keep them as the apples of your two eyes, unless, indeed, you find yourself in extreme difficulties, which you can scarcely do, as there is gold enough in that cabinet, of which this is the key," taking a very ancient one of curiously wrought silver from his breast, "quite enough, with discretion, to support you like a Venetian citizen for at least sixty years. There is yet another present which I wish to accord you, namely, my old *baton*, here it is,"—and drawing the old ivory baton from under his laced pillow, he kissed and handed it to his son, adding, with his last breath,—"Infelice," (that was the youth's somewhat inauspicious name,) "Infelice, my only one, never part with this: swear never to part with your old father's baton, but keep it constantly by you wherever you may go; and if, for you are intemperate, reverse should befal you, when all is lost, and death, perhaps, is staring you in the face, break the baton as a pledge between us, and if it is permitted the spiritual to return, I will be with you in your hour of sorrow and remorse, like a fond father, whose dearest desire is to console even a dissolute child." Infelice, amid a torrent of tears, for withal he had an affectionate heart, took the prescribed oath, and at sunset the music

night of its production, and even then not lost one iota of its attraction, as I was as-

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of poor old Scazziani's voice was heard no more. He was dead.

Infilice shut himself up in his chamber and mourned deeply for almost a week; but when Scazziani was in his marble tomb, one or two of his companions called in, with tears in their eyes, to console Infilice. Then others ventured on the tips of their toes to approach him. The Scyros wine soon, also, found its way again to his table—luxury succeeded luxury—voluptuousness after voluptuousness—extravagance after extravagance, and in less than three years from the time of his father's decease, the generous Infilice was a beggar in the streets of Venice, without a home—without a friend.

Driven by destitution, he became a gondolier, and to keep himself from starvation, for a small pittance rowed people hourly across the Grand Canal, or through the Lagunes. Unaccustomed to toil, and living so scantily, he soon fell sick, and lying upon a miserable pallet in his wretched loft, without doctor, or the means to pay for one, he determined, worn out with grief, to disburthen himself of his miserable existence, by creeping out at night and drowning himself in the deep waters of the Adriatic. Suddenly, as he was creeping forth, the thought occurred to him that he had not fulfilled the promise to his dead father—he had not broken the baton. Superstitiously as well as fortunately, he had never lost sight of it. It was concealed in the old tattered mattress on which he had passed many sleepless and feverish nights. Returning, therefore, slowly to the corner of the den, he thrust his emaciated hand into the hole gnawed by the rats, and pulled out the object of his father's last request. To break it seemed beyond his feeble strength; at length, murmuring a slight prayer, he dashed it

sured the boxes might have been taken for the next month, had it been possible to have kept open the theatre. But a variety of complicated circumstances compelled the lessee unfortunately to relinquish the management, by which, as the Great Exhibition in the new Crystal Palace in Hyde Park brought millions of strangers to town at that period, a fortune was thrown away.

It seems to me that I can remember circumstances which occurred years ago better than events of the last week; for how it

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against a stone, his pillow. It parted in an instant, and marvellous to relate, poured forth a shower of gold, which seemed to the bewildered eyes of Infelice a perfect dream of enchantment. However, gold it *was*, and falling on his knees, Infelice breated a much more fervent prayer, during which the venerable image of his wise old father seemed to rise smilingly before him.

Infelice joyfully and eagerly gathering up the money, and replacing it carefully in the cunningly contrived hollow of the old ivory baton, thrust the whole into his tattered vest, and very speedily, instead of doctor's physic, restored his inward man with a comfortable meal, and a flask of his favourite Scyros. It soon came to be known in Venice that Infelice Scazziani had come *somehow* to a new fortune. Friends suddenly returned. But Infelice Scazziani had, in their absence, read a few smart pages in the book of adversity, and did not forget the lessons they afforded him.

happened that I was requested to write a tragedy, or by whom, for America, I cannot possibly recollect. I know that the great tragedian, Mr. Brooke, was the person fixed on to play the principal part; and, as I considered him one of the best actors of the day, I had but one wish, namely, to please him. It became evident that I did so, and yet the affair, especially as regards that gentleman, proved unsuccessful. The subject I selected was, I believe, from Heroditus, well known to the readers of ancient history, and after the encouragement bestowed on "Azael," I felt no disinclination to try once again an Egyptian subject, especially as it was intended for another country.

Nitocris, Queen of Egypt,

was therefore adopted, and rich it was in glorious qualifications for stage representation. When I had written my play, with which be sure I took time and pains, (it was a great effort, intended to have produced a great effect, in a GREAT country,) I

sent the M.S. to Mr. Brooke, who was acting at Manchester. The answer I received was one of the most flattering opinions imaginable, nothing could have been more gratifying, written by his agent, Mr. Wilton, a gentleman of high literary attainments, himself an author, and well acquainted with the acquirements for the stage. On the return of Mr. Brooke to town, he personally confirmed his perfect satisfaction and good opinion, and great terms were cheerfully awarded me. Yet all this satisfaction and good opinion, and nuggets of gold were completely overbalanced by a single circumstance, which shows on what slender and rainbow foundations the air-blown hopes of the poor dramatist rest. Tehrak, the lover of Nitocris, is an Ethiopian, and it was feared that the part of a negro would not become a favorite with an American audience; for, although Othello might have served for a precedent, still Othello is sanctified by the name of Shakspere. As Mr. Brooke was, therefore, to have played the

Ethiopian, this stifled the affair altogether, as regarded America. Still Mr. Brooke, with the most gentlemanly generosity, never retracted his opinion, and he it was who warmly recommended my new tragedy to Mr. Smith, of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, which recommendation was as strenuously seconded by Mr. Hall Wilton.

I had an interview in consequence of his application, with the manager of Drury Lane. Read "Nitocris" to him. It was immediately purchased and paid for, and *without affectation* or disguise, highly commended by the liberal manager, which was still more gratifying than his money, although that is a necessity without which even poets cannot carry on the battle of steam. I often think it deeply to be regretted that, like the bees, we cannot suck honey from the flowers, and so, as we are unlike other men, live on our sunny course, unlike other men also.

On the subject of this *five act* tragedy I have more to say, and more to complain

of, notwithstanding all the favour with which it was so universally received, than of any other production hitherto placed by me before my unflinching, unfailing, and least of all dreaded friend, the *Public*.

I had the honour to read the M.S. in the great saloon of the theatre, myself, an immense exertion for me; but my hearers consisted not only of the most competent judges, but the most kind and enduring friends, namely, Mr. Barry Sullivan, Wilde, Stuart, (*the* Stuart,) Sterling, the stage director; Miss Glynn, Miss Cleveland, Miss Devear, Mrs. Selby, the gracious manager, Mr. Smith himself, and a variety of *strangers*, of whom I knew nothing. My bodily strength is very inadequate to do myself justice, as a reader of a heavy dramatic work; but all listened to me with the most indulgent interest, and the result was general approval; not one part relinquished by a single actor, as in Azael; which is the greatest proof an author, for the stage, can judge by; no aside requestings to be

written up, not a dessenting voice, not one murmur. A nobleman deeply connected with the pecuniary interests of the theatre, —himself an author—read this tragedy, (without my knowing it,) opposed to the production of tragedy as inattractive, gave his unqualified approval. Ryder told me also, that Barry Sullivan, behind my back, spoke of it as a dramatic production, little inferior to the best works of the kind, on the stage; Mr. Stewart said nearly the same. The opinion of Miss Glynn was equally gratifying; that of Mrs Selby, still more so, for this reason, she had but a very indifferent part for talent like hers, and therefore, was not at all likely to be led away from her sincerity, by any sinister motive, as regarded her sincere opinion. I am thus particular in these facts, because it has been affirmed that I, like most authors, considerably overrated my own abilities, as regarded this tragedy, but it will be seen by the above, that I did not utterly depend on my own judgment; here was the judgment

of a *real dramatic jury*, on whose verdict, I think any author, without being accused of vanity, might have been proud to rely.

To proceed, I shall nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice, but merely relate circumstances exactly as they occurred, for the amusement, as well as information, of such of my readers as may feel interested in theatrical matters.

Our rehearsals were progressing admirably, under the active management of Mr. Sterling, a most able and intelligent man. Scenery of the most gorgeous description, from the truest and remotest authorities, and properties and costumes, for which the British Museum, and every known and available work, had been searched by that celebrated antiquarian, —— Keen, Esq. Those costumes were perfect; the most unique and beautiful, perhaps, ever placed on the English stage. Mr. Smith seemed resolved to spare neither trouble nor expense; one morning, on the stage, a gentleman addressing Mr. Smith, after

having listened for some time to the language, with the greatest attention, said, "Why Smith, where the deuce have you found an author to write such a piece?"

Smith in his off-hand way, replied,—"Oh! Fitz!"—

"Who's Fitz?"

"Why, there he stands; Mr. Fitzball."

Sir William de Bathe turned round, for it was he, and, at once introducing himself to me, with a bow, and an air of courtesy, for which he has no superior, paid me the highest compliments respecting the language, which he said he had been listening to with the utmost pleasure and surprise. If "Nitocris" did me no other essential good it secured me the friendship of that most excellent and amiable gentleman, under whose hospitable roof I have since, times and often, found myself perfectly at home, and in the very best society, with every sincere anxiety for my comfort and prosperity. Thus every succeeding day continued to bring out some

new agreeable event. All went calmly on, my Egyptian galley, with her lotus-leaf oars, and light gauzy sails, seemed to be floating up the lympid Nile, before a golden wind, when lo, a dark speck appeared in the horizon, and of whom should it assume the form, the reader will never guess, but of my old friend, *comic* Charles Matthews, returned from a tour. He was, in fact, *the* acting manager, and seemed to me to roll out of a large walnut shell, on the stage, like some spirit of drollery, in whose presence Melpomene herself dries up her tears, and begins to laugh. This gentleman, and I have no doubt, with every *good* intention on his part, thought proper to read the piece to the performers over again Now, I appeal to any person who has ever seen Mr. Charles Matthews act his comic parts on the stage, whether they can help an involuntary smile at the bare idea of the expression of his face, reading a tragedy; of course the effect was that which would have been produced by his reading one of his

own Olympic burlesques; I confess I could not resist laughing myself, *till tears trickled down my cheeks.* As may very naturally be supposed, I was inwardly and *deeply* mortified; at the same time, I do not mean to infer that he *intended* to turn the play into ridicule, but the more serious he appeared, the more laughable it became, and what was most extraordinary, he seemed the only person unconscious of the effect produced; and I sincerely believe, had he felt what *I* suffered on the occasion, would have been the first to pity me.

The rehearsals now, that Mathews had possessed himself of the subject, proceeded as before. Mathews did his best to set all right; but, as the slightest word he uttered, attempting to be serious, caused a titter, Melpomene, in a panic, picked up her dagger and velvet robe, and quitted the theatre. In fact, the comic muse, in cap and bells, was getting up a serious tragedy. The young lion was playing kitten-like gambols with a scull, and the effect may be

imagined. I have heard from a very clever person too, that in rehearsing a tragedy, there is not the slightest occasion to speak in a dismal voice, or to put on a long melancholy face, so long as you assume it at night. I know not if this opinion be correct; I must leave that to be decided by the experience of such men as Mr. Macready and Mr. Charles Kean. Certain it is, that the rehearsals of my tragedy, the latter ones, were anything but *melancholy*; and, I have no doubt, my *invisible friend*, the reviewer, in the *Times*, who said the morning after its production, that it was dull, (I never heard of a *cheerful* tragedy) would have said quite the reverse had he been lucky enough to have witnessed the rehearsals; and I'm sorry he did not, because he might then have indulged in mirth to his heart's satisfaction, and, perhaps, have been induced to give a different verdict. I should not have been sent to my account so

Unhouselled, unannointed, unannealed.

It may have been, as the author, I saw these

proceedings with jaundiced eyes. Still it was a new way of setting about serious matters. I cannot imagine Liston getting up Hamlet, although I have heard, he attempted to play it; nor Charles Mathews preaching one of Mr. Spurgeon's sermons. I esteem Charles Mathews, especially as a commedian—everybody does. He has an extraordinary warrant from the world for doing whatever he thinks proper with the world; and people only laugh. As a comic actor, I glorify his great and unresistable qualities. If I had a comedy that he would act in, or even produce, I should consider myself a made dramatic author; but as an interpreter of tragedy! *Oh! let him never more be officer of mine!* The frogs in the fable! the frogs in the fable! A man would assuredly laugh and dance at the funeral of his grandmother, if some one all the time kept tickling the soles of his feet. Welcome back droll Charles to your native land—there is nothing like your genius here; I am amongst the first and *sincerest* to

welcome your arrival. Forgive my speaking! but do not refer to my *comic* tragedy; if you do, as your dear father used to say—"That boy will be the death of me." He was as *serious* as Charles Mathews could be; but, much as I liked him, having always received from him the greatest kindness, I should have liked much better, I honestly acknowledge, to have seen him in some of his great gun tricks, convulsing the audience with laughter, rather than directing my tragedy. And, I must here assert, without wishing to give the least offence, that *any* comic man getting up a tragedy in spite of every attempt to subdue himself, is the *wrong* man in the wrong *place*; all I mean to infer by this is, that I should have preferred the assistance of the *humblest* tragedian, more especially Mr. Edward Sterling, to that of the most popular comic actor on the face of the globe; and I have, no doubt, eccentric as the idea may seem, and ungrateful as I may appear, that there are *many* persons of taste, and genius, too, who coincide with me.

We come now to a grand night rehearsal of this tragedy, which was already announced by innumerable bills stuck all over the metropolis in grotesque Egyptian characters which you would have suspected nobody could read. How the public got into possession of the great secret of the announcement, I am utterly at a loss to comprehend; but, in London, it may well be said, there are clever people in the streets *constantly* finding out every thing to enlighten the natives, who themselves find out so little. But to the night rehearsal. It seems by this time, notwithstanding my nervous trepidity, that "Nitrocris" had greatly recovered her dignity, and that the manager had not lost a particle of *his first* impression or courage. As a proof of this, he gave a most splendid supper to upwards of eighty gentlemen, in the grand saloon of the theatre. I was taken by surprise. Mr. Smith wrote me word that he had something to say to me on the subject of the piece, and should be in the saloon waiting to speak

with me. Judge of my astonishment when I entered, on seeing the magnificent tables sumptuously set out for so large an assemblage of persons. I tried to effect my retreat, but that was not permitted. Mr. Smith, who well knew my nervous tendency, had good naturedly hit upon this ruse to make me one of the party. I had no alternative, therefore, but to stay, sit down amongst the gentlemen chiefly of the press, who now arrived in double quick march, and remain silent—I hoped unnoticed. In an hour or so, the rehearsal would commence, and the company of critics adjourn to the boxes; gentlemen of the highest order of intellect and learning, in whose presence a man of my, anything but elocutionary talent, rather than have opened his lips, would have, gladly, gone twenty miles out of the way. Eating and drinking was not slow to commence. I almost think they began toasting before the eating and drinking had come to a conclusion. First, as in duty bound, her Majesty in bumpers

then the Prince Consort, then the army and navy, the drama. All this time, I remained perfectly out of sight, as I hoped and believed. A popular author, opposite, made a very good speech, indeed, respecting the drama. Looking at my watch, I rejoiced to think it was near the hour of adjournment, when that wicked wag, Stocquiller, rose and said it was all very well drinking the drama, and speaking about defunct authors, but the living author of that night —the author of the forthcoming new tragedy, was the author whose health he wished to propose. I ought to feel an undying gratitude, when I remember the unanimous burst of approval with which this was received. The reader, who by this time must have gained some insight into my *really* retiring character, will be astonished to learn, as I *am* now myself, that I actually stood up on my legs, and *made* a *speech*—not a long one, to be sure, but which was received in a manner so indulgent as to have gratified any one, no matter how ambitious of ap-

plause. Respectfully, also, had it been listened to. But the most gratifying feeling of all, was the evident pleasure this unlooked-for event gave the manager, who, with his dark eyes sparkled approval, as if I had accomplished some great triumph. In the next instant, I was reseated wondering at myself, when a gentleman, not theatrical, an entire stranger, introduced himself to my notice, by observing that he had that evening listened in perfect delight to some beautiful speaking, the reply I made was, the *truth*, that the gentleman opposite had made a *very fine* speech on the *drama*; to which the gentleman answered, "excuse my taking the liberty, but your speech was one of the most to my satisfaction. It was so very natural; so to the purpose: neither too short, nor too long; nor a word too little, nor a word too much." This was *exactly* what he said, then turning from me to the eloquent speaker on the drama, whom I had just complimented, he added, don't you think so Mr. ——, who are yourself so eloquent? The reply was, I

don't *write my* speeches before I come. Now this, if not intended as such, was even a *greater* compliment than the others. It proved to me that he thought it must have been accurately considered; that I had not rendered myself quite ridiculous. Mr. Smith well knew I had not the least notion of such a meeting, or, so far from writing a speech, with the slightest hope of the courage to speak it myself, I should have retired considerably out of the way from the apprehension of rendering myself terribly absurd. The dressed rehearsal was now commenced. At the request of the manager, several of the performers presented themselves in the saloon, that the beauty of the costumes and their costliness, might be closely examined. Miss Glynn, as "Nitocris," came in in her classic vestal habit. Nothing had been seen like it since the days of Ancient Egypt, which, with her beauty, her fine commanding figure and queenly expression, elicited the most fervent and delighted approval, from that enlightened assembly.

The reviewers and other gentlemen then retired to the boxes. "Nitocris" was acted that night before that select audience classically, correct, as it was never *acted afterwards*, although represented every consecutive night for upwards of nearly three months, as it will never or can be acted again. At the fall of the curtain, every one expressed his gratification, and all coming round me, paid me the highest respect and commendation. *That was the proudest, the most triumphant moment of my dramatic career.*

The next night witnessed the production of the tragedy before the public, when circumstances presented themselves still more extraordinary than those I have just related. I scarcely need remark, with the papers and placards, had the house been twice the size, it would not have held the audience which attempted to force itself inside its walls. For my own part I had no fixed place to repair to. I was going under the piazza into the theatre, as is my

custom, being so practical, to satisfy my mind concerning the setting of the first scene, when I encountered a gentleman, an entire stranger, who had been at the supper, and frequently on the stage during the numerous rehearsals. He inquired of me where I was going to sit? I told him that really I did not know. "Oh! then," was his reply, most politely, "I have taken a stage box. I expect my wife in the carriage directly—you must sit with us." Grateful for such kind attention, I modestly attempted to withdraw myself. He would hear of *no* refusal. At that instant the lady, a *perfect* lady, with several others arrived in a splendid carriage, dressed, as was the gentleman himself, in the most *distingué* and fashionable style. Nothing could be more polite—nothing could be more refined than their attention. I sat *retired*, at my own wish, with that elegant party and that *gentleman*, so amiable and so truly polite, on the first night of my new

tragedy. And who think you, reader, the *gentleman* was?

Mr. Robson, who was transported for defrauding the Crystal Palace!

But I shall have something more to say of him after the fall of the curtain. The tragedy commenced: it would have been strange indeed if such scenery and such gorgeous properties had not drawn down the loudest approval. In justice to myself, I think I am entitled to add, so did the speeches of Miss Glynn, Mr. Barry Sullivan, and Mr. Stuart in particular, not to forget Mr. Edgar, Miss Cleveland, and Mrs. Selby. Nothing could have gone more satisfactorily. The scene where the *king is assassinated*, a scene terrible to write, and dangerous in the extreme to put on the stage, drew forth a burst of applause as if the whole audience had but one mighty voice. At the conclusion of the third act came a procession, (I detest processions.) This procession was so *immensely* long, hundreds of persons walked on in the most

magnificent dresses, (the Queen's dress alone costing upwards of two hundred pounds,) and bearing sumptuous properties, vast idols in silver and in gold, whose heads absolutely touched the top of theatre. A small snake carried across, with a woman's face, absolutely cost twenty-five pounds. All this was too vast, too antique, and too learned for the audience to appreciate in any degree as it deserved. They did appreciate it, however, for its glitter, as they would have done the procession in Aladdin; and the curtain fell on the magnificent tableau of this scene with unmixed admiration, approval, and wonder. Indeed, at one time I sincerely believe that Mr. Smith would not have considered it unreasonable to have laid out a hundred thousand pounds on this tragedy, as the Athenians did in the single decoration of one of the tragedies of Sophocles.

Before the falling of the green curtain, a *dreadful* feeling came over me that something was wrong. My heart failed me en-

tirely. I could neither go round to inquire, nor remain in the theatre. I went out into the street that the cool air might revive me, and then went home by myself. The truth was, although the scenery was entered in the bills, the two last acts of the tragedy were *omitted;* and when the curtain re-ascended, and a common-place *farce* scene presented itself, the confusion is more easily imagined than described. The public were justly and wisely indignant to the highest degree. What frenzy could have dictated such a proceeding I must leave the reader to conjecture. I only marvel they did not break every chandelier in the house; as it was, a scene of dreadful confusion prevailed. Managers came on and went off as they entered. The pleasant names they were called would not have been agreeable to ears refined. The public insisted on the last two acts: that was impossible. They were promised, however, the next night, and the promise kept. But that was, alas, too late. The leading journal, which I

scarcely blame, especially as no writer for that paper was at the night rehearsal, pronounced it *dull* and *incomprehensible*, as truly so it must have seemed to *him*. This verdict took the lead before all the other papers, which were universally in praise, because the world is invariably inclined to take the worst side; and although this tragedy ran under these appalling circumstances for nearly three months, it never recovered the shock of *paralysis* it sustained on the first night. I make no comments—I attach no individual blame. It is certainly a marvellous dramatic event —a conundrum, which I leave to others, *if they can*, to find out. On that night another surprising circumstance occurred to me. My house was besieged with gentlemen, utter strangers, who came down and insisted upon seeing me: some to condole with me—some to blame me very much, although not present, for not addressing the public. For my own part, I seemed to think myself in a dream; that all I had

witnessed for the last two nights, and was still witnessing, was a delusion. To say nothing of the deep *despairing disappointment* of a *poor* author, who had, as *he* hoped, in the autumn of his life, lit up an inextinguishable flame, to burn through the winter of his years—perhaps over his ashes. It may be some day that some *actor* or some *actress* may take a liking to one of the parts in this original tragedy, and without gorgeous scenery, dresses, or decoration, where it simply tells its own story, it may become all that I anticipated. And of such a frail hope is the feather at the bottom of Pandora's box, which wakes up the heart to its last vibration, the safety valve of life—the bountiful reserve of Providence.

It was remarkable how public sympathy followed me, as respects this play; not so much as regarded the piece itself; not so much as regarded the position of the play itself; but people thought I had been unfairly dealt with, by the observations in the

Times, and wished me to address a letter to the editor; I did not. Such proceedings too generally make things worse, and draw down the thunder on your own head; after all, I still consider those observations no more than *truth*. The tragedy as represented *was* obscure, mysterious, and dull, to use Claude Melnotte's words, "as *they* did it;" a journalist is not supposed to be gifted with the supernatural faculty of knowing "that the greatest is behind." A gentleman, a Mr. Montalba, the same gentleman who spoke to me at the supper table, wrote me a most kind letter, inviting me to his house. Like Patience on the monument, I felt disposed to keep company only with solitude and vexation; but a friend, a *most* sincere one, urged me to accept the invitation, with the remonstrance that I always had shut myself up too much for my own advantage. I went accordingly. On arriving at the mansion, for it was a mansion in Oakley Square, seeing the house brilliantly lighted up, and in the sensitive state I was, my heart some-

what failed me, but for mere shame I do believe I should have retreated. I knocked, and was most graciously received by the gentleman himself, who putting aside the servant, with his own hand took off my cloak, displaying thereby, most *distinctly*, the *perfect* gentleman. He then conducted me into a room, in which were assembled thirty or forty other gentlemen, by whom I was received with the most *marked* deference and congratulations; I never was more astonished in my life, nor needs the reader be surprised at it, when he comes to learn that this company consisted of some of the first talent in the kingdom, one in particular, whose acquaintance was excessively gratifying to *me*, Bailey, the immortal sculptor of Eve at the fountain; I had written some lines on that celebrated statue, and published them, they were genuine, as an impulse of the gratification at the delight I experienced in first viewing that magnificent and interesting work of art. Little did I then suppose I should ever know its

gifted author. There was also my old acquaintance, the orator of the supper table in the saloon, on the night of the dressed rehearsal; who, if he was a little brusque on the former occasion, made more than ample amends on this. Not only speaking highly of my tragedy, but by the mere force of memory, making a quotation therefrom.

> "Quickly's the word, for if the offence grow up,
> Like the usurping tree, whose shooting boughs
> Drop, and strike root again,
> Then shoot forth others,
> Making one only forest of itself,
> This Ethiop,
> Will, for *himself* alone,
> O'erspread the land."

He was himself the author of a fine tragedy, which, luckily for him, was not *too well* got up. Marston was there, the author of many highly successful and beautiful plays, brought out chiefly, I think, under the tasteful, never-failing influence of Mr. Charles Kean, and of such gems as these, the whole company was composed; there were also many of our finest painters, one in particular, a gentleman advanced in life,

who reminded me, in his personal appearance, of some of the finest portraits of Rubens. I shall never forget him, nor the elegant and refined speech that he made, about the absolute *necessity* of worldly care; which he illustrated by the lives of great men, especially that of Raphael. In a rich, consoling voice, too, which seemed to breathe with the music of heaven.

I next received a crested note from *Mr. Robson*, inviting me to Kilburn Priory, to meet there, also, another party of well wishers. This, however, I did decline, out of no disrespect to the writer, who, at all events had conducted himself in the handsomest manner to me, but I was ill, my heart had become affected, and glad I was afterwards, when Mr. William Beverley* in-

* The mention of William Beverley's name, recalls to my mind an amusing anecdote. I was on a visit to him recently at Hampton, within a few yards of Garrick's Villa, on the lovely banks of the Thames. In the evening he took me and his charming wife for a row in a boat, by moonlight, on the water, the stars shone brilliantly into the blue stream, as we almost silently glided on. I started

formed me that he also had been invited and declined, and rejoiced when he was informed that the party consisted of upwards of eighty or ninety personages, who were compelled, many of them, to sit upon the drawing-room stairs. From Mr. Robson, however, there was no escaping; I was reading one day in my room, when a knock came at my door, and Mr. Robson was introduced in *propria persona*; he was a very handsome young man, most agreeable in his manners, with a very fascinating address. He had come, he said, to invite me to dine with him, and could take no refusal, if I was particular, I was, his wife said, to

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something about the plurality of worlds, at which Beverley, bursting forth into a sort of rhapsody, made some enquiry as to what the end of the world would be like, or *was* like, I could not exactly define which, as he became very metaphysical. The next morning we were blackberrying in some green lanes, when we suddenly came upon a small solitary public house, which, by the sign over the door, proved to be the "End of the world." "There," I observed, pointing, "you wanted to know something about the end of the world." "Well!" he replied, facetiously, "I should never have thought the end of the world would turn out a *Tea Garden*."

select my own dinner, and my own guests; and as he kept his carriage, he would call for me at five any evening, and send me home at *any* hour. Such kindness it was not possible to decline, therefore I fixed upon the afternoon. The dinner I cared little about, the simpler the better, I left it to *madame;* society, I wished for none but theirs, and with truth, for she was quite a lady, and he exceedingly accomplished. He had produced a play called "Love and Loyalty," with the Wallacks, at the Marylebone; I saw it represented. Mr. W. Wallack and his wife, (one of the best actresses we have,) both played in it, and a very good drama it was, the language sparkling and *beautiful.*

At the time appointed he came for me in a handsome carriage; I went with him to Kilburn Priory, where I met with a most hospitable reception. The only visitor, beside myself, was one of our popular novellists. He dropped in after dinner. No attention was spared to render me

comfortable, or to make me happy. In the course of conversation, when we were alone, Robson asked me the extraordinary question, what I thought he *was*, when I first saw him on the stage, at the rehearsal: whether I took him for a gentleman or not?

My matter-of-fact reply was, "Just to prove to you how *easily* even close observers of character may be mistaken, I was puzzled, and had my doubts."

"From what cause?"

"Not from your manners, not from your conversation; certainly not from your looks. But you wore *white kid* gloves."

"Was that any inference?"

"It was my old-fashioned habit to think so, in the morning at a stage rehearsal; but you see I was *quite* mistaken." I then complimented him on the success of his drama, his accomplishments, his home, his interesting wife, his domestic happiness; for, with all these blessings, he *seemed* to me most bountifully endowed. And I'm afraid I turned my eyes a *little* comparatively into my

own circumstances and, marvelled, as we are apt to do, why God, who is all-bountiful, still makes such mighty differences between man and man. Alas! I little knew the meaning of the sigh which escaped poor Robson's lips! I must pity him; he was so young, so amiable. He got up, took from a bookcase one of his plays, "Love and Loyalty," and writing on it, handed the book to me with the greatest courtesy. What he wrote was this—"From one who aspires one day to be "as popular an author as Mr. Fitzball. "From, &c., ROBSON."

We were now interrupted by the arrival of the celebrated novellist, with whom Robson gambled and played like a boy till coffee was served. Then Mrs. Robson sang and played the piano sweetly, but mournfully. The evening came to a close, and I *was sent* home as promised.

From that, to me, happy evening, I never met Robson but once, and then I *did* see what appeared to me a change in his usually bright manner. That which had been na-

tural, had become like acting. I could not account for it in a man whom I thought gifted with every earthly blessing. Unfortunately, the hidden canker was but too soon explained by the papers; and this gifted and sunny creature, not able to resist temptation, had become a *felon* and an *outlaw*. It is certainly inconsistent with the *just* laws of society, to compassionate crime of any kind. But, however wrong it may be, I cannot reflect upon all the qualifications of that poor deluded young man, without sincerely deploring his infirmity, and feeling for him, and for his unhappy wife, the deepest regret. I do hope, after the expiration of years, he is still very young, that it may not be too late for him to return, with convicted and amended feelings, into the honourable path of society he could well have adorned, which, by his delinquency, he has forfeited, and which, under other circumstances, he was so well calculated to embellish.

Some time previously to all this, having gone down to visit my daughter, who resides

by the sea side, I wrote an original comedy —this comedy I resolved to inflict on poor Buckstone. It was called, then, the "Haughty Word," which has since degenerated into the "Widow's Wedding;" though the widow, even up to the time of my writing this, is still unwed. She has been accepted and highly approved, thrown off many of her weeds; but still a widow. Such is the fortune of war, the playwright's war, especially.

First and foremost, I had forwarded my new original play to the manager of the Haymarket. I know not if he was enchanted; but he accepted and returned me a kind reply. Mrs. Fitzwilliam wrote also to me: she was a very old friend, and had played for me in one of my early dramas, at the Surrey, called "Laurette," from Marmontel, which, by the way, was exceedingly well spoken of by the papers. She was then Miss Copeland, a charming singer, and very pretty, and as good an actress, and always

so amiable, as was her letter respecting my comedy, which, with Buckstone's, I insert—

Mr. Buckstone's Letter.

"My Dear Fitzball,—

"I only last night (Sunday) was en-
"abled to get time to read your comedy.
"I'm somewhat puzzled about it. The
"tone and conduct of the story belong more
"to William and Mary, or Queen Anne's
"time, than to the present day, or I should
"say, that of James II. The gipsey scene
"and wedding would be more in unison
"with that period. Then there's a diffi-
"culty in the umbrella scene. When was
"the first umbrella used? I think in the
"early part of George III.'s time. At all
"events, I should recommend the scene
"being removed from the present day. We
"cannot act the piece till after Xmas. Are
"you content to wait?

"Yours truly,

"B. Buckstone."

Then in the same envelope, a few cheering lines from dear Mrs. Fitzwilliam.

"My dear Mr. Fitzball,—

"I participated in the reading last "evening. Mr. Buckstone sees a great deal "of good in it, with a few easy alterations. "I will play Fanny; but instead of young, "timid, and beautiful, you must make "her jolly and good natured as in the "'Rough Diamond.'

"Yours ever,

"Fanny Fitzwilliam."

You see, by the kind encouraging note slipped into Buckstone's envelope, how amiable and considerative she was for others. How sensible as to what would suit herself, —a sense which applies to so very few of her sex, decidedly on the stage.

The alterations made, apparently pleased Buckstone, who, at my request, agreed to draw his pen through the whole. We had rowed together in the same boat before; and at the conclusion of Miss Cushman's en-

gagement, some time after, it was decided my piece should be produced. We still were at fault. I wanted a fine gentleman, and a fine lady. I hoped Miss Cushman, that capital actress, might have played my fine lady, and Barry Sullivan, a gentleman "every inch," have been engaged for the other part. But Miss Cushman had a new play to bring out, from the pen of Mr. Chorley, and it would have been presumptuous of me to expect her to turn aside her thoughts an instant from a great part, which I know absorbed entirely—*very properly so*, all her attention. Mr. Chorley's tragedy was brought out, shortly after which, Miss Cushman, I believe, returned to America, and the "Haughty Word" was on the eve of being spoken, that is to say, put into rehearsal, when, sad, alas! to relate, poor Mrs. Fitzwilliam, whom I had seen well, and in excellent spirits a few days before, was taken suddenly ill, and *died*. She wrote me a note to go to the theatre, where she wished to consult me about the costumes

—I think it was on the following Monday. In compliance with her injunction, I was repairing to the Haymarket Theatre, where I expected to find her, when I met Mr. Walter Lacey near the Opera House, who communicated to me the fatal news. If ever I felt a grief akin to that I felt for my dear wife, it was the grief I felt for poor Mrs. Fitzwilliam. A kinder heart than hers never beat in female bosom. Having both seen and heard from her so previously, it seemed impossible that she should be no more; but it was too true. Every self-interested feeling was absorbed in regret for the *woman*. Her worth, her talents, were alike irrepairable: the one, to hearts, in which *she* was the life; the others, to the theatre, of which *they* were the life also. I wrote on that occasion a few lines, which appeared in the different papers, and also in my "House to Let." I intrude them here, not from any vanity as respects their trifling merits, but with a *sincere* desire to prolong her remembrance by the very best means in my power

LINES

In memory of Mrs. Fitzwilliam, (who died Monday, September 11th, 1854.)

Gone? while yet upon my ear,
Like music's sweetest tone,
The echo of her voice I hear,
They tell me she is gone!
I scarcely can believe it true,
That thus the leaf is shed,
Which hung so green upon the bough—
Now living! and now dead!

Oh! I had known her many years,
In young, in happier hours,
With smiles to chase the poet's fears,
And strew his path with flow'rs.
In crazy, wandering Madge of yore,
So thrilling was her lay,
How oft I felt the tears flow o'er,
I had no pow'r to stay.

Yet those same lips, and those same eyes,
Could sparkle into mirth,
As when through clouds, the summer skies
Burst blue, and golden forth.
Still all her mimic powers of art
Fell short, though great they were,
Of that great goodness of her heart,
So gentle, yet sincere.

And as with histrionic sway,
None mightier skill could blend;
So none, with sweeter truths, could play,
The *woman*, and the *friend*.
Dig her grave 'neath hawthorn bowers,
Where silence loves to sleep;
Cover it o'er with sweet wild flow'rs,
Then come with me and weep.

In consequence of these poor lines, a very humble tribute to her memory, Mr. Buckstone wrote me a beautiful letter full of the deepest feeling and sensibility; as did also her son, expressing his gratitude. But, alas! in those cases, sympathy can only alleviate. Time, alone, can close the wound. Some months after, I received another letter from Mr. Buckstone, wherein he spoke of the comedy, and his sincere desire to keep faith with me; but where were we to find an actress capable of sustaining a part written entirely for the talent of Mrs. Fitzwilliam?—her appearance, her simplicity, her vivacity? It was not possible. Added to which, there was a brokenheartedness about him at the idea of playing it with another person. It seemed to annoy and disgust him; I felt it so, and no longer urged its performance. That he was quite truthful in his expressions, is clearly proved by the following extract from a letter on the subject by young Fitzwilliam, who was at the time very ill of a decline, and has since,

also, there cannot be a doubt, with his mother in *Heaven*.

"DEAR SIR,—

"There is music in your play; and it "it will afford me *great* pleasure to do any- "thing I can for the piece, which, I hope, "will soon be produced—and that with "genuine success. From what I heard my "poor mother say of it, I do not doubt it "for a moment. Wishing you a happy "new year, and many of them, believe me.

"Yours sincerely,

"EDWARD FITZWILLIAM.

"Jan. 3rd, 1855."

This season I again returned to the sea-side to visit my daughter—my only inducement. The sea-side *never* agrees with me, much as I love to tread its golden shores, and mark and muse upon the flight of the white, wave-skimming seabird; or ponder over he heaven-tinted shells, and listen to the sad murmur of the mysterious waters. All these charms soon give way to the beating

in the head, which invariably ensues; and I speedily begin to wish myself once again wandering through the inland hills and valleys of beautiful Hampstead Heath, which, although called a cockney rurality, being so near to London has no rival in my mind for salubrity, or sylvan beauty in the world—

Sweet breath of morn which Sunday's walks supplies,
Here on this hill, all redolent of health,
How exquisite thou art, gift of the skies,
The mother's blessing, and the poor man's wealth.
His *only* wealth on which he meditates,
While bending o'er his work, too oft in pain,
And ponders o'er the pleasure which awaits,
His footsteps here when Sunday comes again.

I know not exactly on which of these excursions it happened, that going down to he rocks, between Brighton and Rottendean, for the benefit of bathing from the shore, I one day dropped my keys out of my pocket. Returning home, without discovering my loss till I arrived, I was too fatigued with the heat of the sun to retrace my steps that day. The following morning I rose early and repaired to the spot, not in

the least doubting but I should find my keys lying on the sand. I was mistaken; my search was in vain. The morning was somewhat stormy and blusterous, the waves rolled high, and the sea spray flung a sort of hazy mist towards the shore. I was stooping very low examining the crevices of the rocks, when I heard a somewhat musical voice exclaim, in solemn accents—

Demon! demon! what seekest thou?

There is something startling in the word *demon*, especially when that sombre appellation is evidently addressed to one's self. And this sounded very like the appeal of *Zamiel! Zamiel!* in the incantation scene of "Der Freischütz." For an instant I thought of the boy's advice to Don Cæsar de Bazan—

"Send for a priest, and confess your sins."

But, as there was no priest nearer than Brighton, neither had I any messenger to send, consequently I remembered the old adage about turn round and face the ——. I did so, when whose form, more welcome

to me than the elderly gentleman, with reverence to his name respectfully omitted, could have presented itself to my astonished and delighted gaze, than the good-looking features of my harmonious friend,

Sims Reeves;

he of the dulcet voice, who had no doubt come hither, like myself, to run over the KEYS; with this especial difference—if he ran over his keys he found them, if I ran over mine I did not. A hearty laugh was the full accompaniment to our mutual recognition. Although I had dark suspicions that this could not in fact be he of the crotchets and quavers, whom I really desired so much to see and speak to. If I called at his house, he was sure to be gone half an hour before, to vocalise at Manchester, or York, or Canterbury, or to draw tears from, or make the glasses ring in the Crystal Palace. Yet there we were, met by accident on a damp morning, by the anything but Æolian murmurs of the white and emerald waters. Yet there walked we up

and down the beach, all along the yellow sand, at least for one hour; talking of operas, music, and Balfe. We concerted a grand opera, the "Corsican Brothers." Reeves was to play himself, and his brother, and by no means to give up the ghost. This idea was practically commenced, but not carried out. Balfe, who was exceedingly sanguine when he first heard of the subject, quailed eventually in his enthusiasm, and so ended the grand sea-side opera. While I was remaining at Brighton, during an epistolatory correspondence with Reeves on this subject, I wrote him a burlesque note in rhyme, in the style of the Corsican Brothers, to ask to speak to him, and let me know at what hour. Reeves returned me an answer in the same style, still in the Zamiel way. written in *blue* ink, in poetry of his own composing, something like—

> When the blue moon shines bright and pretty,
> Meet me, Fitzy, on the jetty.

I regret, exceedingly, that I have not the whole of this original effusion of Reeves'

poetical genius, for the gratification of my, I hope, numerous readers. It would have much amazed and amused them, especially the gentler sex. A very droll circumstance came out of it. I had to meet a lady whom I had promised to escort to the botanical exhibition at the Pavilion, when, lo! and behold, I had lost a note containing her address. Everywhere I searched in vain, so did Mrs. Feast, my kind landlady, but fruitlessly. I was much distressed; however, I luckily found the lady, and with all chivalry attended her to the *fête* of flowers. Some weeks after this I received in London a letter, per post, from my landlady at Brighton, who rejoiced, she said, at having found behind the drawers the lost note, about which I appeared so very anxious, and had immediately sent it to relieve my mind. This note, supposed by Mrs. F. to be from the lady in question, written in blue, true emblem of fidelity, was no other than the inspiration of my friend Sims Reeves—

When the blue moon shines bright and pretty,
Meet me, Fitzy, on the jetty, &c., &c.

It was at Brighton that I first had the very great satisfaction of hearing

Miss Fanny Kemble

read Shakspeare. "The Winter's Tale" was the subject. Mrs. Hughes, the wife of one of the proprietors of Vauxhall when I was engaged there: a lady of great classic taste and refinement, and, I am proud to boast, a most kind friend of mine, was going to the rooms by herself. I wished to attend her, and as we poets, everybody knows, are not celebrated for possessing too much of the essential oil of gold, I promised to write to Miss Kemble for an admission. Mrs. Hughes shook her head doubtfully. "I'm afraid," she said, "you stand but an indifferent chance of a reply. Miss Kemble, I am told, is constantly so much occupied as scarcely to find time to write even to members of her own family." Still I hazarded the note. No answer came. I almost think I had a little bet with Mrs. Hughes. Was it a pair of white

kid gloves? Another day—and another; no note. The day of the performance, the rain descending in torrents—rap, tap, tap, at the door. An especial messenger from Miss Kemble with the admission, and a *letter*—oh, such a delightful letter! Such recognition!—wasn't I proud? Didn't I forget the rain and flourish off in a fly, quite as expensive as the admission would have been, and didn't I call for the lady, flourish my letter about like a bank note of large amount, and read it to the admiration and surprise of my friends, who were as pleased as myself?—and wasn't I the winner of the white kid gloves?

But the reading: how exquisite! how sublimely accented! I never, till then, believed the human mind, or human voice, capable of so much expression, much more of representing a whole play, character after character, better than ever I had seen them on the stage. Miss Kemble requested I would attend every performance; need I say I did so, and every time with new gratification. The very recollection of it turns

back my heart, and the homage of my whole mind to that gifted family, at whose pure shrine I always did and always shall offer up the unalloyed incense of devoted admiration. The love of genius, the respect of talent, is to me as natural an impulse as a sacred prayer, in contemplating the works of the Omnipotent. And I often marvel how men, of genius themselves, can so often and so heartlessly, with that most fatal of weapons in pitiless hands, the pen, with a single stroke crush the aspiring merit which contains even *one* redeeming colour.

During a recent stay on the coast, I happened one morning to go boating with my son-in-law,* but coming to a lock, which opens into the sea near Southwick, he proposed pulling into the open sea. This treat, however, I declined; suffering always *fearfully* from that horrible malady, sea sickness. I, therefore, went ashore to take a stroll through the country, while he continued his excursion on the waves. Coming to Southwick Green, and seeing at some

* Captain Morgan.

small distance a little rustic village church, I repaired towards it. I like to stroll into a country churchyard, where the old forefathers of the hamlet sleep. It brings back to my mind, all the soothing influence inspired by Grey's immortal Elegy in a Country Churchyard. Accordingly, I stepped over the green, through the little swing gate by the ivied porch, there intending to read some of the quaint epitaphs generally displayed. I came immediately in contact with a remarkable, antique, cross-like tomb. The words were not easy to decypher; but the name of Young struck me. Could it be possible? It was possible! There, in this unpretending solitude, after life's fitful fever, slept well the gifted

Charles Young.

The Hamlet, *the* Othello, *the* Macbeth! The Frantic Lover, the Jealous Husband, the ambitious Thane; all compressed beneath a clod of earth! a few wild flowers, and a silent spot! Hush, memory! Tears be still! Speak heart!

LINES

At the tomb of Charles Young, in Southwick Churchyard.

Where yonder ancient ivy weeps,
'Neath the green turf *an actor* sleeps,—
A little cross, with daisies hung,
Points the last scene of poor Charles Young.
O! lovely is the spot! and fair—
Worthy the ashes slumbering there:—
So hallowed, ev'ry object round,
It might be deemed enchanted ground:
Here, cottage-children lightly tread,
Unconscious of the mighty dead
Sleeping beneath. There, peaceful sheep,
Thro' velvet meadows, softly creep;
While, sweetly from the downy dell,
Rings, tinkling up, the wether-bell,
Mingling its wild, clear melody,
With the faint sea-waves' distant sigh,
You'd think Heav'n's silver bells were ringing,
And angels sighed while they were singing.
Still, memo'y will call back the day,
When that cold form was more than clay,
And conjure up the majesty
Of Denmark's faded dignity—
The "air-drawn dagger" too, *his look*
Made *visible*.—As in a book,
When base Iago's fell intent,
Like Etna sheath'd in adament,
You read, in those deep darkning eyes,
What the chill'd heart scarce dar'd surmise.
These are the glories of the art
Which "come like shadows, so depart;"
These were *his* glories, such as now,
Wreath not their gold round *ev'ry* brow
After life's fever, he sleeps well,
A better harp may, some day, tell

His better story; where his tomb,
Is known to few: in summer's bloom,
Green is the path: a village church,
To Sabbath chimes, unlocks its porch;
Go Pilgrim, e'er from fashion's throng,
Go, wander there
And breathe a pray'r,
For the *great* actor, and GOOD *man*, CHARLES YOUNG.
New-year's Day, 1158.

From Charle Young, let us turn, wipe away a starting tear, and proceed to another Charles —

Charles Dillon.

I seem to have pertained to the age of the Charles's; Charles Young, Charles Kemble, Charles Kean, Charles Mathews, and Charles Dillon. I was one day proceeding towards the Chain Pier, (Brighton) when suddenly I encounted a very valuable and *sincere* old friend of mine, Mr Conquest, manager and proprietor of the Eagle Theatre, (the Grecian) London, who informed me, that a Mr. Charles Dillon, his son-in-law, a capital actor, had taken the Lyceum Theatre, and, if I had anything on hand, he would do it every justice. I enquired what sort of an actor he was. "In

Jim Wallack's line" was the reply. I thought of my comedy at the Haymarket, told Conquest, and promised to send for, and forward it to Mr. Dillon. This was immediately done; I wrote to Mr. Buckstone, who despatched, not my own M.S., but the copy made out for representation in his theatre in the Haymarket, at the time of poor Mrs. Fitzwilliam's death. Sides marked, designs of scenes, with a variety of ideas and suggestions drawn and written in by Buckstone himself. One alteration was to me most affecting; the name of Fanny in the piece (Mrs. Fitzwilliam's name) was crossed out by Mr. Buckstone, and that of "Lucy" substituted. This little circumstance, so touching, if I had required any conviction *of* the author's truthfulness, would have amply supplied it; and might here be set down as a beautiful illustration of one of those high points of feeling, which thrill through the heart at once, and leave a more lasting impression than a whole volume of the finest sentiment. Mr.

Dillon, who was at Manchester, I believe, wrote me word that he liked the comedy exceedingly; that, if we could only come to terms, it was a settled point, and he would bring it out in a manner to satisfy my most sanguine wishes. Terms were speedily agreed upon, and when Dillon came to town, the theatre fairly opened, himself playing Belphegor. The "Widow's Wed ding," was read in the green-room excellently by himself, before, at least, forty persons, ladies and gentlemen, and received with the greatest approval; Mr. Toole, one of our very best comic actors, who was cast for the part written for Mr. Buckstone, an entire stranger to me, expressing his perfect satisfaction: not that, as I have already shown, the opinions of actors are infallible. Graham, the musical professor, related to me a circumstance respecting Tom Dibdin. Tom, having written a new comedy, invited the performers to hear it read at his cottage, at Hounslow. The good wine and viands, and the fine bracing air gave such a zest to

the favourable opinions, that the comedy was pronounced sparkling, they meant the champagne, for at night, when the public, who had perhaps not any champagne during the day, came to judge, the comedy was pronounced dull as ditch water, and at the end of the second act, unequivocally d——d; in fact, a regular robbery from Molière, to which poor Tom, in his facetious way, observed that it was an unjust condemnation, for Molière never crossed Hounslow Heath in his life, but he supposed, living there himself, they must make out that he had committed a robbery in the dark, on *somebody*.

Now came an under current of differences; the part of Fanny, written for Mrs. Fitzwilliam, having been selected for Mrs. Dillon's own representation, led to a dispute with another lady engaged for that line of business. This caused a great misunderstan ding, far from my comprehension. The lady in question, quitted the theatre; and, all of a sudden, although the comedy was underlined for

speedy representation, the rehearsals were suspended, and the season with "Conrad and Medora," the only successful piece that I recollect, came to a close. A fairy palace in this scene, after the style of William Beverley, painted by Fenton, fairly astounded the public. The next season, the "Widow's Wedding," was again announced with a great acquisition in its behalf, inasmuch as (Mrs. Mellon) Miss Woolgar, who did more than justice to every part she undertook, was deputed to play the principal character—the Widow—notwithstanding which, the banns published, the licence, as I was assured, absolutely purchased, there seemed to want nothing but a *ring* (up,) when it came to pass, they had somehow, nobody knew how, *lost* one of the acts. I had no copy. Before I could have supplied one from memory, Dillon, who had not anything like so good a season as the last, would have become as he did, a failing manager.*

* Honourable mention should here be made of Marston's "Life, Ransom."

From the little I saw of Dillon, as an actor, I considered him a rough diamond; his Belphegor, in a melodrame of that title, his crack part, was excellent; his Shakespere's characters all too vociferous, a fault easily amended. He was *the* best in "Claude Melnotte;" his very own wrought colouring gave a truthfulness, not meditated by the artist, to the gardener's son. His performance in the "Three Musqueteers," was exceedingly original, and a very happy conception. His handsome wife, also, was very clever in parts of feeling, especially, and high melodramatic characters—in the wife of "Belphegor," for instance; but as I never saw her act anything droll, except in burlesque, which is *unnatural*, I cannot at all imagine what she would have done with Mrs. Fitzwilliam's part of Fanny, to which she did me the honour to take such a liking. I can only regret that I did not see her perform it. As a manager, Mr. Dillon appeared to me too good-natured and relying, thinking with the *thoughts* of *others*, rather

than with those God had given him for his own especial use. He has returned to the platitude, where he is a welcome *star;* heartily glad, I should say, to be rid of the *yoke* of a London theatre, which, however, it may rhyme with *joke*, is a much more serious one than many, and clever people, too, imagine, till they try to pass it off as their own. I once saw a country manager, who had just taken Drury Lane, when a theatrical friend called on him from the country, to congratulate him on becoming lessee, get up into his chair and crow, exceedingly like a cock. In a few weeks after, I saw him in the same chair, bent down with repentance, weeping like a child. Be happy, you country managers that float in schooners under shadow of the land, laugh in your sleeves when the wind blows strongly, and the loud thunder beats like an earthquake against the exposed ribs of the mid-waved London Leviathans. And you, young authors, that would write for the stage, see here the history of an old experienced

author's comedy, and what you may prepare your minds to expect in your turn. You that could not be what you are, were you not endowed with fine feelings, and a polished taste, far from the just respect, perhaps the comprehension, of those whom your superior talent sustains.* I must add here, that I never yet saw *any actor*, however talented, *make* a *bad* play a *good* one! nor even a speech tell which had not in it the true essence of genius, no matter whether tragic or comic. The philosophy of some managers as regards us poor authors is occasionally quite stoical, not unlike King Charles's beef-eater. A disappointed author, in the time of Charles II., repaired to the water in the

* The Divine proverb says, if a man smite you on the right cheek, offer him the left; but the Italian proverb has it—

Chi troppo pecora si fa il Lupo sel mangia.

There is a silver thread to be drawn between these two, of which I have invariably availed *myself;* and after the production of upwards a hundred dramas, in *all sorts* of theatres, I recollect but few instances of disrespect; and fewer still, which did not terminate in regret on the offending side, and credit on mine.

park to drown himself, but finding the water too chilly to be comfortable, he sprang out and hanged himself on an adjoining tree. One of the Beefeaters who was sitting near the spot, feeding the king's ducks, quietly observed all this, and, on being reproved for allowing it to take place, "How the deuce could I understand such a manœuvre!" said he, "I naturally came to the conclusion, as he went into the water to *wash* himself, that he merely hung himself on the tree to *dry*."

Mrs. Charles Dillon

was not only a pretty actress, but a very pretty dancer, of the Duverney school. I have frequently reflected, as I sat to witness those graceful movements, the poetry of action, on the vast change come over dancing in this country, little less surprising than railways compared to high roads: especially extraordinary when I tell you of a circumstance related to me by an old gentleman, of a *delightful* Mrs. Wyebrow, in the time of George III., who, as the per-

fection of a danseuse, fascinated every heart by loudly keeping time with her *high-heeled* shoes to the tune in the orchestra. In such characters as Medora and Lalla Rookh, Mrs. C. Dillon realised the poet's romantic dream, and recalled forcibly to the old stager the days when the Peri-like Miss Foote, afterwards Countess of Harrington, was the bright refulgence in Farley's "Vision of the Sun," or that enchantress, Miss Farebrother, in some of her romantic parts.

Mr. Cresnick

Having, some time ago, had a great desire to write a part for this gentleman, now one of, if not our most finished tragic actor on the stage, though sadly lost sight of at the Surrey, however much there appreciated, of which theatre, in conjunction with Mr. Sheppard, he is lessee, I hit upon a Welch story, called the

Children of the Castle.

I took the greatest pains, wishing, if possible, to please the popular actor, to enlist

him in my cause, and thrust him as a new arrow into my shield. But, from some motive or other, unluckily for me, he would not be converted into an arrow to make a hit for me, nor enlist to play the hero of my new drama. I believe at the time I presented my M.S., he had another and a more classic part in his august mind. I had not taken him at the ebb which leads on to fortune. Like the startled deer, I fly from a M.S. when it has once been stricken by the slightest barb of rejection, although it not unfrequently happens that the deer, cured by Doctor Time of his wound, becomes the strongest in the flock.

Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Holt,

having taken the Marylebone Theatre, I heard a good account of them, and therefore went over to witness their performance. The Marylebone is one of the most difficult theatres in or near London into which to drag an audience. I knew that but too well, consequently was not surprised when I saw a very indifferent house; but I *was*

surprised when I saw two such *really good actors.* Mr. Clarence Holt heard that I was in the house, and with great politeness sent me his compliments, saying he should much like to speak to me. I excused myself that night, being unusually late, but having to go into the neighbourhood next morning, called to return my compliments in exchange for his of the foregoing evening. I found him a very sensible man, exceedingly enthusiastic in his profession. He had recently returned from Australia, or California, I forget which, where with his own exertions as an actor, and those of his talented wife, he had made a considerable sum of money. His desire was to have appeared at Drury Lane, or the Haymarket; but as no opening could be gained, at either of those theatres, he had, unluckily for himself, taken the Marylebone, the least understandable of theatres to a stranger, where his merits, and those of his wife, with their money, were almost entirely thrown away. Even Mrs. Warner, who became at one

time lessee of this theatre, did not attract, although the Keeleys, at a more suitable time, met with great success. Mr. Douglas made it answer still better. Mr. Holt requested to know if I had a new drama, as he wished to try the effect of originality on the denisons of Portman Market. I recollected the "Children of the Castle," and thought the subject might please them—especially the children. He liked the idea. I read him the piece, which was at once cheerfully accepted, and produced under the able stage directorship of Mr. Neville, exceedingly well acted, and as well received. At the end of every act the manager and manageress were called before the public, as were their two clever little daughters, who played the children. Mr. Holt's fine, melodious voice told admirably, especially in the speeches of tenderness and feeling, and being a young, active man, with a good figure, the dramatic portion, also, could not have been better done. Mrs. Holt was a good actress.

Some of the papers did her the honor to liken her to Ristori. Nothing could have gone better or more triumphantly than this drama: yet, in a very few nights, the audiences fell back into their original level, and after the run of his Christmas pantomime, Mr. Holt quitted a theatre, where nothing will do but unceasing variety, and that of a very peculiar description. This understood, a fortune might be made even at the Marylebone. It seems to me that people go there to be startled up by explosions. It was Maggioni, the Italian poet, who related to me the story of some old Milanese nobleman, who usually repaired to the theatre, to take a comfortable *siesta*. He lulled himself, or rather was lulled to sleep by the soft strains of the overture. After some time, waking up, if the performance was a comedy, he enquired whether the lovers had got married; if they had not, he went to sleep again; if tragedy, he demanded whether they were killed; if that sad catastrophe had taken place, he put on his hat, and went home to bed.

In the Portman Market stands a chapel or church, built originally for a legitimate theatre, what an idea! why not have chosen Salisbury Plain as more salubrious to legitimacy? I was retained to write the opening piece, but this house of prayer was never devoted to a den of ———, I must not implicate, either *myself*, or *the profession*. I had written a melodrame at the Marylebone, formerly for Mr. Smith, "Hans Von Steine," which ran upwards of forty nights; Wild, Mr. H. Frazer, Miss Le Brun, and Miss Fanny Williams played in it. Yet that piece was scarcely ever represented in any *other* theatre, a circumstance alone shewing the peculiar taste of this peculiar audience. Yet strange and contradictory to add, no audience ever more appreciated language than *they* did that of the "Children of the Castle," so admirably interpreted by Mr. and Mrs. Holt, such, for instance, as the following:—

Lord William: Oh! what a sweet, a magic word is *rest!*
The pillow'd head—the heart that sleeps in quiet,
Locking out sorrow with a golden key—

Till even thro' the keyhole, prying care
Cannot peep in.

Again—

Lady Mabel: Wife to *thee!* rather I'd crawl the earth,
Begging my scanty bread from door to door,
Steep'd in mine own tears: sleep at night,
In the dark forest, by the famish'd wolf
Rather than by thy side; thou demon!
Coming to woo me with thy gory hands,
Stained with my children's blood.

These speeches were received with acclamations.

But as there seems to me to be a of sort hiatus in the narrative here, my river becoming rather weedy, to prevent my readers falling asleep, I shall just seize this opportunity to relate, as we row on, an original anecdote or two, of

The Elder Mathews.

Being one time at Boulogne, at the hotel which leads from the sea to the lower town, instead of the unclouded blue sky of *La belle France*, we had nothing but a sky as dark and dingy as Erebus, and an unceasing rain, which promised no abatement. One morning, while the marble-sized rain-drops of the unmitigating shower were battering

against every window like a pelting discharge of artillery, and the desponding *garçons* swinging their white napkins to and fro, as if they were waiting to be strangled in them, Mathews created such an excitement as caused the pitiless rain to be forgotten. If old Lear had met with a similar one, he would have forgotten his memorable malediction. The shrill cry of a half-suffocated infant was suddenly heard in the room, or rather sort of bar, in which sat the landlady, with a bunch of flowers mounted on her *tête*, as high as a church steeple. The lady looked perfectly astounded at this unexpected sound, which the mimic, apparently busy writing a letter, affected not to hear; she lifted up the gaudy tablecloth, from under which the sound evidently proceeded; the scream was then repeated in an adjoining drawer; the lady turned pale as death, she hurriedly rang the bell, and in rushed chamber-maids, and *garçons* without end, all searching *pour l'enfant*, which now squeaked in every drawer and closet alternately. Every-

body was consternated, the ventriloquist, Mathews, pretending to be as consternated as the rest. At length the sound took quite a different turn, it was that of a drowning puppy, in a cask of *eau-de-vie*; at this, the still more affrighted mistress of the establishment looked more aghast; her ugly French poodle, for which Mathews had a particular aversion, had suddenly disappeared. The fact was, while everybody's back was turned, Mathews had slipped it into a box.

"Oh, mon Dieu! mon Dieu! Mons. Mathew," screamed the excited lady, "dere is leetle beautiful Bijeau, just as I was make for him jacket and pair of pantoufle, gone and drown himself, on account of de nasty rain, in de *eau-de-vie*, and will not come out of de bung-hole, though I call him eber so sweet, and hold him de lump of sugar. Bijeau! Bijeau! Bijeau." She was just on the point of having the barrel staved, without a moment reflecting how the poodle could possibly have got inside, when the dog, set loose by Mathews, like Jack,

jumpt out of the box, to the uncomprehending astonishment, if not consternation, of everybody; and what was singular, the rain *suddenly* subsided, which they attributed as much to Mr. Mathews's conjurations, as the mysterious reappearance of the landlady's pet poodle.

On another occasion, when Mathews was a very young man, in the Yorkshire circuit, with Tate Wilkinson, having hired a horse to proceed to Wakefield, (I believe,) after riding some ten or twelve miles, he bethought himself of putting up at a little roadside inn for the purpose of getting his dinner. Having first conscientiously ordered half a peck of oats and beans for his Rozinante, he took a turn, while the bacon and eggs were frying, into a neighbouring churchyard to read the scraps of original poetry on the gravestones: he had a great passion for gravestones, monuments, and, indeed, antiquities of all sorts. On coming back to the public house, he bethought him to look into the stable to see how his horse was going on, and was not a little surprised

to find that he had already cleared the manger of both beans and oats, although his grinders were evidently none of the best. "Your beans must have been boiled, or unusually soft," observed the facetious mimic to a carroty-headed elderly fellow of a hostler, called the *lad*, who stood four feet three in his never-cleaned hobnails, rubbing up a rusty pair of bits with a whisp of hay.

"Did you say *soft*, Muster?" enquired the astonished hobnails.

"Yes! either your beans must have been *soft*, or you think I am, if you imagine I am to believe that the horse has eaten the oats and beans in so short a time."

The *old* boy turned quite round, and looking, with the impudence of low cunning, into Mathews's face, observed, with as fine a piece of acting as he himself could have assumed, peeping, at the same time, askance into the manger, "Well, blow me if he aint gone an' bolted them *banes*, *woats* an' all."

"I don't believe he's had any given him to *bolt*," said Mathews, coolly.

Hobnail put on a hurt look, "What do you take *us* for?" enquired he. "Why I goven'm *meself*, woats an' all, an' a matter o' half a quarter over; the hungry baste!"

"Now," continued Mathews, "you know that to be a downright falsehood"

"A falsehood?" putting on a bullying air.

"Yes, a falsehood! However, I'll ask the horse."

"Axt the hos?"

"Yes, axt the hos!" then, turning to the manger, "Jack!" he enquired, "have you had your banes and woats?"

"Noa, I'm d——d if I have; the "rogue han't gove me none," was the unanswerable reply.

Hobnail turned pale as a sheet, roared out lustily, and, in attempting to enter the house, fell down on a dunghill in a fit, to which, as he was subject, it seemed; the landlord, who came out, merely threw a

bucket of water over him, and left him to recover by himself. Desiring the landlord to administer the oats and beans to the horse, which he did at once, Mathews now repaired into the hostelry, finished a hearty dinner, and taking a glass with his jolly host, ordered his horse, to proceed on his journey.

Poor Hobnail, who by this time had recovered his senses, and told such wonderful stories about the *speaking* horse; every individual in the village was at the door to witness the traveller's departure. Mounted, Mathews offered the usual twopence to Hobnail, but the fellow, slinking back, said, "Noa, noa, I arn't to be cotched that ere way!" no doubt mistaking Mathews for the great master of all evil. At this, Mathews exclaimed to the horse, "Jack, have you had your woats?"

"Yes," was the reply, and before the whole party had regained anything like self, Mathews had set spurs to Jack, and disappeared, as they all said, *nobody knowed how.*

My nephew, a young gentleman of considerable abilities, Mr. Henry Watkinson, editor and proprietor of a leading country journal, coming to see me a little previously to this period, while I was writing a note, amused himself by reading a little poem which I had inadvertently written from observation, in the street where I lived, called

*The House to Let,**

was so much struck with the story, as to enquire what I was going to do with it! I had no idea, nor why I wrote it. Of all things on earth, poetry is the most *un*-payable. He requested to print it in his journal; he did so, and from which it was transferred into so many papers, that, eventually, he published it in the form of a volume, with a number of other stray pieces, dedicated to my sincere and excellent friend, Sir William de Bathé. I speak with great pride of this work, the more especially because it was a little out of my way, not being in the least dramatic. I received

* Translated into French by Le Chevalier de Chatelain —into Italian by Maggioni.

many good words too from the editors, especially the *Musical World* and the *Court Circular*—such good words as kindly as from time to time I had been spoken of I never received before. But this was not all—a *much* higher honour awaited me:

HER MAJESTY,

from an advertisement announcing the publication of the work, was most graciously pleased to send an express messenger from Buckingham Palace to my house to purchase the first copy. This just proves the truth of the assertion that Her Gracious Majesty never loses sight of the *humblest* talent in her kingdom, and is the very *first* herself to tender it her support and patronage.

Miss Nightingale, also, sent me a letter of commendation on that poem. *The* Miss Nightingale of the Crimea, whose approval might sanctify any work, no matter what.

This brings me to 1858. A letter from my *auld* acquaintance, Henry Phillips, the popular tenor, reminding me of a little

operetta, "Auld Robin Gray," which I had written for the music of Alexander Lee, nearly twenty years previously—a piece accepted by Mr. Macready, during his lesseeship of Drury Lane, underlined, but never produced, on account of the protracted indisposition of Mrs. Waylet, who was to have represented Jenny, the comic parts intended for Mr. and Mrs. Keeley, Mrs. Keeley being a beautiful ballad singer —is still so, no doubt—Auld Robin Gray, especially for Phillips himself. It was with the utmost difficulty, (Lee being dead,) that some of the music, could be found. "Blow, ye gentle gales," and the "Beautiful Smile of the Auld Man's Wife," however, were restored, through the exertions of T. Mackinlay, Esq., of the firm of Goulding and D'Almaine—that firm having paid an immense sum for the copyright in the composer's lifetime. Mr. Phillips felt a great desire still to produce this operetta on the stage, therefore entered into an agreement with Mr. Sheppard,

of the Surrey, to represent it at his theatre. Sheppard, who is a very enthusiastic and candid manager, wrote to me on the subject without the slightest affectation, expressing his approval, agreed cheerfully to my conditions, and accordingly

Auld Robin Gray,

the cause of so many gentle tears, through lang years past from lovely eyes for the unhappy fate of puir Jenny, made his, I believe by no means first, appearance, in other forms, on the stage at the Surrey Theatre, in 1858, and was most kindly welcomed. Mrs. F. Grosvenor, formerly Miss Fanny Healy, of the "Siege of Rochelle" celebrity, was Jenny, and sang the ballads sweetly, especially the "Sweet Burn Side." Phillips *was* Auld Robin himself. And here, again, how much was I indebted to my friend Widdicombe, who, as a Doctor's Boy, put his master's prescriptions into the fire, and administered others of his own, mysteriously compounded—chloroform for senna—to the unhappy patients. Every-

thing he said and did, aided by that clever little actress, Miss E Johnstone, set the house in roars of laughter, and contributed *immensely* to the success of the operetta. With this drama, nearly everything I had ever written for the stage had been produced, which is very remarkable when you come to consider how difficult it is even to get a play read, much more accepted, by the sometimes over-fastidious managers. The very first melodrame I had acted I simply left at the stage door, like an infant in the turning-box; it found its way to the manager, and a fortnight after was in full sail. If I could bring myself to believe in destiny, I should certainly say my destiny was to write for the stage. How often, disheartened or *disgusted* have I tried other pursuits, and invariably failing been *compelled* to "turn again Whittington;" with, however, a very different termination to that of the worthy lord mayor of yore: I was the cat that killed the rat, but the gilded crown fell on very different brows. I

should, *perhaps*, have, in a pecuniary sense, done much more wisely to have stuck to the cultivation of wheat or barley, and imitating the immortal Burns, eschewed poetry at the plough tail—*perhaps not.* We have all our various propensities, without knowing why. The lark flies up to sing "at heaven's gate," the wagtail twitters in the newly turned-up furrough. It is a marvellous pleasant thing to be able to appreciate; but it is equally delightful to be appreciated for appreciating. Although now, after so long, and not so unsuccessful a course, gladly would I sit quietly under the branches of the yellow-leafed autumn tree. Yet, I fear me, when the golden trumpet of Fame sounded the praise of others, the heart of the battered old gladiator would spring up again, and yearn to participate in the triumph of new victories. The drama is, truly, at a low ebb. She cannot well, in comparison even with her faded magnificence of my early days, and that's a negative consolation, sink lower. And why? She has not a temple

—a *home* that she can really call her own. There are many *great* dramatic writers; but, in common parlance, what is the use of a hat, with no head to put it on? Not that I am going to quarrel with my country —I am too thorough-bred an Englishman for that. But I cannot think that we are a truly dramatic nation, especially when compared with France. One would scarcely believe it possible that the humblest theatre should be open a single night in this vast metropolis without being crowded to the ceiling. Yet how frequently do we witness empty benches to meritorious things? The insolvency of managers is an every day drama. Even those who contrive to weather the storm, the reader would be amazed to learn how occasionally low their receipts are; and the classic worshipper of legitimacy might shrink back with horror to learn that more than one modern manager looks as much forward to his Christmas pantomime, as the farmer to his golden harvest, to pay legitimate losses—the blights

and hail storms of the early season. I know that one of our greatest lessees, now retired from the stage, during his management at Drury Lane, brought out a magnificent tragedy, exquisitely acted, by which he lost upwards of two thousand pounds; and this ruinous outpouring was only stopped by the production of a musical piece, in which the effect of the ebbing and flowing of the sea created a vast sensation. A *fine* tragedy, produced under the management of Mr. Macready, at Drury Lane, called "Gissipus," ought not to be overlooked. I for one, draw no inferences of the decline of the drama from the payment to authors in the past days, (authors are cleverer now than they were.) If a man received a thousand pounds for his tragedy, it was because a manager could not, then, slip over to Paris, (we being at that period at war with France,) and for a couple of francs purchase a popular French drama, then steam home to London again, and filter himself through a principal part of his

cheaply acquired purchase, by the aid of borrowed plumes, *alias* the French actor's *costume*. If either Colman, Morton, or any of those popular writers had lived in the present time, they would have stood a very indifferent chance of receiving thousand-pound cheques. Managers had, then, *only* English talent, for which they were compelled to pay, or have no talent at all. I should be glad to learn which of the elder dramatists could have written a better, or half so good a play as the "Hunchback," "Virginius," the "Lady of Lyons," or "Money!" No; the drama, it is true, has declined, but certainly it cannot be on account of the want of merit in its living dramatists, while we boast of Knowles, Bulwer, Serle, Coyne, Planché, Buckstone, Oxenford, Chorley, Simpson, Selby, Bernard, Marston, the Broughs, and a whole phalanx of younger talent, all glittering together like one starry constellation of dramatic genius. We must recollect, also, in the time of Colman, Morton, &c., Drury Lane and Covent

Garden had *their seasons*, at the end of which, the Haymarket *opened for its season.* Minor theatres were almost unknown. It was many years before theatres were allowed in the city; and now we have not only innumerable splendid theatres, but innumerable Cider Cellars, Canterbury Halls, Gin Palaces, Taverns, Casinos, &c., where singing of the best kind, and dancing are displayed, whose charms are doubly accelerated by the charms of bottled stout, brandy and water, &c., &c. The musical listener listens to Handel, and *handles* the stout at the same interval. Our rude forefathers could sob over Mrs. Siddons in tragedy, or be convulsed with laughter at Mrs. Jordan in a farce; but the playgoers of the present day seem to have lost the hearty character of the old English public, and to require either crying or laughing, a bodily stimulant constantly within reach to supply the exhaustion of both mind and body. We always, since the days of Nell Gwynne, had our oranges, to suck, why not since Nelly's time our

ginger beer? but formerly refreshments were modestly disposed of *entre acte*. They say that the "*march of intellect*" increases. I am almost inclined to doubt that: the spread of education increases—that brings intellect to greater perfection. Tenpenny nails are now wrought by steam and machinery a thousand a minute. Wonderful! But it was much more wonderful to reflect that the Temple of the Sun, supposed to have been the finest work since creation, in Palmyra, was built without nails at all, unless we bring into account the nails of the workman's fingers. How, then, shall we balance this simple question with a suitable opinion? to which of the two award the prize of intellect? to the inventors of nails, beneath whose clasping embrasure houses have stood many hundreds of years—or to the erectors of the Temple of the Sun, and various gorgeous palaces, which have stood thousands upon thousands of years, and whose magnificent *ruins* still astonish and *instruct* mankind! What wonderful disclosures towards

the improvement of scientific men might be made if the spirit rappers would only conjure up the ghost of the poor Queen of Palmyra, Zenobia, or some of the master architects of her time. But it does not seem to occur to those superhuman-gifted visionaries to conjure up any *useful* member of the past, who might enlighten us on so remote a retrospect; although I did hear a very intelligent erudite man assert that a tragedy had absolutely been written by an invisibly-guided hand, dictated by the spirit of the old Bard of Avon himself. This play, he said, had all the merit and genius of Shakspeare, but I have never yet heard of its being brought out. I confess that I am somewhat sceptical as regards the wonderful influences ascribed to the mesmeric gift; although, as a droll experiment, I must relate an anecdote which occurred under my own apparent influence. When I resided next door to poor Crevelli, I dined at his house nearly every Sunday, and met at his hospitable table a large company, mostly

Italians: amongst the rest, a professional gentleman of great celebrity, who also invited me to his house, to which, also, I frequently repaired. It seemed however, much of a favourite as I happened to be with the Signor, I was not equally so with the Signora. She said that I talked too much, (ladies liking generally to have that privilege all to themselves) this was not her case, however: she was a very silent lady, and little expected this observation would ever reach my ear. A brother poet, with the kindest intention in the world, gave me the hint; from that moment I stood aloof from the delicately-nerved lady, and in her presence made a rule to remain as silent as circumstances and my naturally open disposition would allow me. This event, ridiculous as it may appear, estranged me a little from the house; till, passing one day, the Signor was standing at his door, and, as usual, most politely invited me to enter. I did so, and to my

surprise and regret, found her silent ladyship, not over silent herself, seated on the sofa, and writhing under the painful inflictions of a swollen face. Accustomed as I have been for years to the illnesses of my wife, I enlist all my warmest sympathies, especially with the sufferings of woman. Habit is, sometimes, even stronger than nature. I inquired of La Signora what application she had made? "Everything, without the *slightest* effect!" was her desponding reply.

Laudanum, leeches, poppyheads, all of no avail. I had heard of mesmerism producing *astonishing* effects. What was mesmerism? Merely passing the tips of the fingers over the part affected! Was it painful? Not at all; on the contrary, said to be assuaging.

And the Signor made a rather awkward attempt at displaying the operation on his wife's face; it produced no effect.

I had visited the Mesmeric Institution:

I had seen the celebrated Mr. Capon mesmerise. It was not exactly after the Signor's manner.

The spasm grew worse. "How was it?" cried the suffering lady, impatiently, in an agony, as if anticipating some relief.

"Have I your permission?" demanded I, of the Caro Sposo.

"Si si! Signor," impatiently.

Immediately I gave the usual passes, and in less than five minutes, as by the touch of magic, the pain was *gone!*

The patient looked gratefully up, and exclaimed with a beautiful smile, for she was *very* beautiful, and with a dulcet voice,—

"I'll never *blame you for too much talking in future.*"

In the course of a few hours, the swelling in her cheek had totally subsided. And the last time I saw the Signor, on enquiring after *my* patient, I found that she had not had even the slightest return of the attack. I was a *mesmerist!* Perhaps, like Theodore Hook, I shall come to see *invisible* stars

next.* This mesmeric influence, as they call it, who believes in it, is said to be another

Theodore Hook.

* One very dark night in November, Theodore Hook had been dining with a few *select* friends, and imbibed a sufficient quantity of wine to somewhat obscure his vision. A facetious friend of his, an Irishman, on their way home, asked him to point out a few planets, and great constellations. Hook entering into the other's vein, looked upwards through the dim obscurity of the night very earnestly, and, after a minute's deliberation, exclaimed, although not a solitary star was visible—"Beautiful! bright as midday! I never saw the *invisible* world so *clear* before. There's Mars; there's Venus; there's ——!" and his voice beginning now to be rather husky, his friend led him into his own house, where he was on a visit, and ordered his night-cap, a stiff glass of whiskey punch. Hook rallied as if by magic, and, taking up a pen, wrote the following impromptu.

I saw the *invisible* stars,
So distant, so cold, and so pale,
I scarce could distinguish old Mars,
So far from the Little Bear's tail.

Jupiter, crimson with rage,
Venus all trembling with fear,
Saturn looked worn with old age,
And Juno she dropt a sad tear.

Urania seem'd wan and alas,
Herschel the size of a tester,
Far, far out of sight appear'd Pallas,
Beyond I could scarcely see Vesta.

My vision was clear as noonday,
And that was a great consolation,

proof of the march of intellect. Yet, the Egyptians practised it. In the British Museum you will see numerous instances illustrative of this, with the patient seated, and the mesmeriser standing before him exercising his influence. Verifying the old axiom of our forefathers—Nothing new under the sun.

For I saw, as you Irishmen say,
Taurus Bull, a bright consthellation.

The Great Bear, too, appeared like an ox,
Gazing down on the sprightly young Ram,
Who look'd up to Castor and Pollux,
As neither a *mister* or *mam*.

Far below the horizon was Crab,
Not the poet, no that I must say,
Nor Shelley, the author of Mab,
Who took flight in the Milky Way.

Virgo look'd more like a man,
Whilst Leo resembled a virgin,
Indeed, I mistook them for Pan,
Though more like a fish call'd a sturgeon.

Pisces seem'd very odd fish,
Whence Libra was picking the *scales*,
And Lyra the sight seem'd to relish,
Whilst Aquarius stood near with his pails.

Capricornus of course was a goat,
Which Sagittarius shot in a bluster;
Pole Star, without breeches or coat,
Kick'd the Pleiades into a *cluster*.

It seems to me now, that my songs, with their quiet weight, and my various operas, with their numerous glees, trios, ballads, &c., have done my reputation intrinsically more real good than even my plays and melodramatic works, numerous as they are, and that good, strengthening, not declining with the progress of time. For this, I feel that I ought to share the reputation with my numerous composers, whose names I here gratefully and proudly record, and sincerely acknowledge.

Balfe, Vincent Wallace, Rodwell, Loder, H. Smart, Barnett, Blewitt, Ferdinand, Riess, Henry Laurent, Walter Maynard, Tully, M'Carroll, Nelson, Westrop, Henry Phillips, Montgomery, Alexander Lee, Hatton, Glover, Smith, E. Land, Macfarren, and Sir Henry Bishop. To these are to be added, numerous pieces adapted to the music of Meyerbeer, Rossini, Mozart, Donnizetti, &c., &c. Many of my operas have been translated, both into German and

Italian, and performed in those languages; and that exquisite French poet

Le Chevalier de Chatelain,

Has done me the honour to translate my "Fairy and the Flowers," and the "House to Let," most elegantly, and with great purity, into his native language. Every-one of these talented names seems to record my claim to the success awarded me by the public, by qualifying that to which each individual name is attached, to my lyric productions especially, as the signature to a bank note, giving it nearly, if not entirely, its intrinsic worth. I forgot to mention in the course of these pages, an opera, produced at the Surrey, called

The Forest Maiden.

The music by Tully, in which Miss Rainsforth, Miss Rebecca Isaacs, Mr. Borani, and Mr. William Harrison, performed with the utmost approval. The story laid in the reign of Queen Mary, was very interesting; and the music sweet and natural.

Miss Rainsforth,

the most modest and lady-like singer and actress (a real model for the imitation of others of her sex,) on the stage, rendered her part Alice Copley in this agreeable opera, very interesting, by the perfection which she gave both to the music and language. Nor was pretty little Rebecca Isaacs less entitled to the approval which she drew down from the audience, and the tears, too, which she excited in the pathetic ballad of the Moorish Page—

Like the lilly
In the valley, &c.

lines in imitation of some of those older madrigals and ballads, so patiently and tastefully collected from the mouldering leaves of sylvan ages, by my excellent literary friend, William Chapel, Esq., in his learned volumes of Ancient Songs and Ballads of the Olden Times. A work replete with interest to the poet and the antiquarian.

It has been my good fortune to bring before the operatic public, first on the stage, our very best composers, Balfe, and Wallace,

and also Henry Laurent and Henry Smart. Henry Laurent in his grand opera of

Quentin Durward,

at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden, where, although the theatre was exceedingly out of odour at the time, it met with decided success; the part of Quentin, by Mr. William Harrison. The opera, or rather operetta of Mr. Henry Smart, "Berta," was produced at the Haymarket. Mr. and Mrs. Sims Reeves, Wiess, Manvers, William Farren, &c., playing the various parts. Music is by no means in its ascendent at this theatre; the book, too, was not ponderous enough for the weight of the composer's work, consequently this opera, excellent and appreciated as it really was, aided also by the finest scenery, by Mr. Calcott, as well as the finest singing, by Reeves, failed of attraction, simply because the public do not seek music at this house. In his next attempt to do himself anything like justice, Mr. Smart must adopt a *more important* subject in a *much larger* theatre.

As regards the operas of which I have written the books, I again ascribe little merit to myself, I am both willing and anxious to award *all* the popularity they may have acquired to their various composers. I must still infer, however, that I know of no truly successful opera which is not sustained by a really dramatic and interesting libretto. "The Siege of Rochelle," was almost my first attempt of the kind, and the "Siege of Rochelle" was next akin to a translation. My principal credit, in those early days of concerted music being the *larding up* of abstruse passages with stage effects, to render them digestible to unsophisticated listeners, without which I *still* question if the beautiful finale, excellent as it is, to Balfe's first opera, would have gone quite so smoothly down, or have been so long remembered by the public. Another fine opera, since produced, with a much finer finale, unassisted by similar effects, failed, being only represented a few solitary nights, and is now forgotten, at all events by the million. The

people, during twenty years, especially since the works of Meyerbeer, have become wonderfully astute to music of the deepest dye, although I think even that great and judicious master by no means spurns the *light* of other days, to assist his chromatic passages; "Robert the Devil," for instance. My old colleague Balfe, has of late years, I feel, turned somewhat of an apostate from the early faith between us two; but the world and the world's doings, in order to keep pace with prosperity, and the changing peals of time, leave little space in business transactions for individual appreciation or partiality as is fully, by his recent success, borne out; neither am I so sanguine in such matters as I was wont. I have written, however, *two* works for Vincent Wallace, already purchased, which I anxiously wish to see produced; they are splendid efforts of fine musical conception and composition. I predict for them a great, a grand career. Henri Laurent has also an opera accepted by Mr. Smith at Drury Lane, of the merits

of which the first great musical judges speak *highly*. Singers of the first repute are hovering far and wide, picking up, no doubt, the golden grain in every quarter, Sims Reeves, Weiss, E. Gæler, Haigh Drayton, Victoire Balfe, Jenny Baur, Mademoiselle Vaneri, Madame Weiss, and Madame Anna Bishop. I trust the day is not far remote when we shall again hear every one of these resplendent nightingales, like harbingers of a new operatic spring, all warbling in their own atmosphere,—London.

It may be in these pages that I have omitted many names to which I wish to throw the myrtle. Young aspirants whose blossoms in the olden times would have been so beautifully trailed up ; but in the various works whereon I have been and am occupied, (a new novel for instance, in three volumes, "The Gipsy Wedding," already in the press,) my memory is a little overcharged, and if I have anywhere repeated a twice-told tale, as is not altogether

unlikely, I must stand excused, as I hope I shall, for my forgetfulness.

Apropos still of blue fire, of which I have been *accused* of being the inventor,—if poor Clara Webster had simply danced before this theatrical *ignis fatui*, which sets fire to *nothing*, (in the "Revolt of the Harem") she would not have been burnt to death almost before the audience by her light dress attracting the gas, but probably have been still living, and still a young woman. The merits of this fine scientific chemical preparation, at which the ignorant smile, are not simply applied to effects on the stage, but are used in the greatest emergencies, as signals at sea, especially during fogs, and have saved not only many valuable lives, but many vessels from destruction. Blue-fire is a discovery well qualified in the pages of humanity.

The story of Scazziani has no novelty to recommend it, a tale of the kind being to be found in the French and in the Arabian Nights. Douglas Jerrold, also, seems to

have had an idea of it in his "Rent Day.' This version, however, is the *original*, I believe, although never before in print.

Those fine old leaves of the drama, Charles Kemble, Bishop, Osbaldiston, Bartley, Wilde, Harley, Rodwell, and Douglas Jerrold, have dropped one after the other from the tree of life. Of the three latter, though supposed to be all affluent men, report ascribes to their latter fortunes a sad reverse. Rodwell told me at one period that he was worth thirty thousand pounds. But merit, poetical and histrionic, seems to hold little account with life assurance offices, as if the muses spurned from their fairy court the selfish sordidness of golden Mammon, within whose dazzling circle the children of the world delight so much to warm, and not unfrequently do singe their motley wings, which seems somehow to have been the case with one or two of my old friends above, to whose good memories, however, it is mine to throw the wreath which *never fades*, and which gold, with all its imaginary

and mistaken value, could never purchase the well-earned coronal of gifted, almost self-taught men—nature's pupils:—for, be it understood, learning, (not even the deepest erudition of Cambridge or Oxford) supplies no particle of wit or genius, they are the emanations of God alone, and are therefore entitled, even in their rudest shape, to a reverence and a veneration akin to sanctity, which education should teach us religiously to observe as it does our prayers.

I remarked a few pages back, that nothing new remained under the sun. I am now about in some degree, in my own person, to contradict that long-established assertion, by a lame attempt at something new myself, by placing *my preface*, as it were, at the end of my work, instead of the commencement; simply for this reason: mine is an unusual preface which dips its extremities at one end into the waves of the past, and at the other, into the flowing on of the future, a garland of wild flowers flung carelessly enough into the stream, and

held back by a briar, from which, when I am gone, some kind and abler hand may set it free to float to its eventual termination. I allude to a *succeeding volume*, which may carry on this narrative hereafter to its close, when its original writer has reached that mysterious bourne, from which no traveller returns.

In composing this book, it was my first intention to have written it as a fiction, naming myself by some other appellation, after the manner of John Halifax, simply to have escaped an apparent egotism, in being always compelled to speak of myself—I—I—I unceasingly. This intention, however, has been overruled, on the plea that I must then have given fictitious names to my plays also, which would have produced, if not a ridiculous, a less truthful colour, and have seemed more like affectation. It is not pleasant to a sensitive mind to be constantly recurring to the first personal pronoun ; but, in a narrative of facts, it cannot be avoided. The reader, therefore, who

indulgently does me the honour to peruse these pages, will, I hope, make an excuse for me when he perceives how frequently I seem inclined to make frightened excuses for myself. Nor do I pretend to assume any high order of merit in this work. It is the isolated life of a man who has, in his early productions, turned the slow tide of a certain portion (the middle portion) of the drama into a new, certainly a much stronger light, and set up morality, with his firmest efforts in such sort of works *which was not so before.* Millions of spectators have witnessed the representation of my dramas in England, Scotland, Ireland, and America; and if there be in them the essence of that morality, which I allude to—millions of persons must, in some way or other, have been bettered by their representation. Nor is this all, when I say *isolated,* I mean that the work is, for thirty years, a true history of *one* practical observer of the stage; for although both Knowles, or Planchè could each write a much more elevated book on this subject,

neither of those gentlemen has gone through such a ramification of it in every known theatre, in every species of drama, tragedy, comedy, farce, burlesque, opera, melodrame, pantomine, and monodrame, and that purely as an *Englishman*, without recourse to the French, except per order. Added to this, Mr. Knowles' play would be written according to his *own* taste, and acted accordingly. Mr. Planchè was a great translator; the greatest, probably, that ever did translate for the stage; the actions of his translated pieces were already invented; few had to *be* invented by himself. Under these reflections, without ascribing any impertinent merit to myself, I must certainly, for the last thirty years, at least, have been the most *practical* author on the boards. I often marvel, now, how I contrived to get things done which I invented. In some of my startling positions, when the performers came to a standstill, Osbaldiston used to say, "It's an *impossibility*; but just let's see how *he's* going to do it." Well, do I remember,

this remark before the four-room'd scene in "Jonathan Bradford." Mr. Egerton, then of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, also, who was a most kind adviser, said to me during the rehearsals of that play, I hear you have a *double scene* in your new drama, at the Surrey, *most dangerous*, at which the actors *laugh behind your back;* take my advice, as a friend, cut it out. At Covent Garden we produced, not long ago, a play called "Venoni," with a double scene, of only *two* chambers, (mine was four) which no one understood. It utterly d——d the piece! Beware! clever as you are, and original as your ideas are, you go too far. Still I persevered; the result has already been told.

From these observations it is still more easy to be comprehended, I trust, *how* anxiously I wish these memoirs to be received as a *rough* history of that stage, over which I walked for nearly the last half century; my own history forming the *under* current. The cry was the decline of the drama, when

I began to write, the great actors, *then*, were only the remnants of greater actors, therefore we may naturally come to this conclusion, that the actors of 1858, are the remnants of those who *then* remained. The third generation. I hope it will not, according to the old Mosaic prediction, proceed to the *fourth*, before a supply of new oil to the declining lamp, is administered by some rising genius, like Kean, or O'Neil, both to astonish and delight mankind. If not, a long farewell to the player. And the legitimate stage itself, a long farewell to all its greatness; it will be as much buried up in the ashes of a few descending years, as the theatres of Pompei, under the ashes of Vesuvius. But as a writer of one of the leading articles in the *Times* once said of Lord *Somebody*, who held forth with great eloquence in the house, he winds his speeches all up, as comfortably as Fitzball does his grand operas, and everybody is delighted. I am not going from my general rule, even here, and therefore, if I throw a somewhat dim shadow over the

histrionic hemisphere, I shall make my utmost endeavour, to turn on a better light before I conclude.

The decline of the stage, and its remedy.

In the first place we want *a* National Theatre, where plays, &c., are acted, written by *English* authors; *English*, simply to shew, as we are *first* in all scientific matters, that we are not *disgracefully* behind other nations, in *mental* matters, especially of the drama, the loftiest grade of perfection in any nation, it was so esteemed by the Greeks and the Romans. This national drama, which in my mind, and in the mind of all rational persons, forming, improving the virtuous and noble character of a great people, elevating them from Satyrs to men, is of as great importance to the country as the finest precepts, so often preached, but so little listened to; and therefore should be, for the country's own credit, assisted *by the country*, as elsewhere. Government ought, most assuredly, to indemnify a *deserving* manager from ruin.

I see the day approaching, when it *will* be so. What is more, we require two other theatres, sustained on the same principle; a grand national opera, and a vaudeville, or demi opera, for *young* composers, and this *will be*, some day, and soon I trust, for the honour of England. Just before my time, gentlemen, with education, taste, and pure love of the drama, with immense fortunes at their command, managed Covent Garden Theatre, who, from want of the very assistance I have quoted, were ruined and swept away, as a reward for their enthusiasm of the divine art, and left to die beggars in a foreign land, since to return to their own, would have been to die in a prison. What has followed for thirty years? Adventurer after adventurer, a succession of speculating and reckless attempts, incited either by avarice or vanity, and a succession of failures, everyone bringing into disrespect, the desecrated altar of our national stage, and why? because it had not the *real national*

support, the support of the government, for which (I speak in unmeasured terms,) the *national* drama of England has become a laughing stock, and a byeword with other lands, far inferior to Englishmen, in mental merit, and instead of being looked up to for imitation, as a great national glory, may well be considered a national *disgrace*.

Managers.—Then for managers of our *national* theatre. Let your manager be neither an *actor*, a *singer*, a *dancer*, nor an author. If an actor, you will get only monodramatic tragedies, or comedies, in which he will play all the monodramatic heroes himself, the other actors all candle-holders. If a singer—ditto, one solo; if a dancer, ditto, *une pas*, and, like the acting master of a circus, woe to the light pair of heels that jumps higher than his own; If an author, worse. In the existing state of things a manager has a just right to play all the *best* parts himself, especially as he has to pay for his *own* amusement, which, eventually, he generally does. A national

manager must be business-like, yet a gentleman of taste, elegance, education, not composed of Greek and Latin knowledge *merely*, but a knowledge of the world; liberal, with a mind to appreciate, *detect* incipient genius, and above all, a *real lover* of the drama, and no charlatan, not to fancy, if he has the honour to be patronized by a *queen* or a *king*, that he himself is innoculated with kingliness; (the throne of a theatre royal is one thing; the throne of England or France, quite another,) with not only an innate, but a national desire and pride to promote the glory of the art.

Actors.—If this idea, as I hope, should ever be born out by the legislature, all theatres would then *look up*, like plants that are watered by a kindly hand; actors also: why? they would have *something* to look up to, the *National Theatre.* It would then be no longer a hardship for the poor actor to toil his weary years in the provinces, (especially in great towns, where no doubt, the example set in London, would be

quickly adopted, respecting *their* theatres,) with every probability that his long and settled apprenticeship, having made him a perfect master of his calling, he would find himself transferred, eventually, to the *mighty* temple of his better hopes. It was thus, when the drama was a profession, that Kemble, Siddons, Glover, O'Neil, Edmund Kean, Liston, the elder Mathews, Dowton, Munden, Farren, and a long line of gone-by comets, came to town *perfect;* and not as now, Mr. Brown as Hamlet, and Miss Bobbins as Lady Macbeth, their first and *last* appearance on any stage.

Come like shadows, so depart.

There is no longer a great school for great acting; as events are, it would not answer the purpose. Everything is *fast*—the result is *fast.* With a well regulated, *nationally assisted, national* theatre, all these things would find, in a few years, a very *speedy* remedy. It is quite a delusion to suppose that acting can be put on with the costume, or that a man can walk out of the

street, as Mr. Jones, and find himself King Lear before the gas-lights, because he carries a bundle of straw under his arm, and wears a white wig and a wreath of flowers. Neither can acting be *taught*, any more than poetry, though both may be improved by education, as a diamond may be polished by rubbing and grinding. A man must be *born* an actor, as well as a poet; then he must pass an ordeal—walk through the hot ploughshares—the dance of eggs. I remember Mr. Wigan when he did not know how to deliver a common message. What a fine actor he *made himself!* Charles Kean, a very *few* years ago, though then a *star*—the name of Kean a tower of strength—was no more to be compared to what he is now than I to Hercules. He seems to me not the *same* man. Witness his Hamlet, his Louis XI., his *perfect* King Lear. But Charles Kean had doubtless in *his* mind for years some theatre of his own to look forward to, and under that great stimulus he was excited to become the actor he now is:

as all players would be under the stimulus of a National Theatre—a *home*—in perspective.

I think I perceive, through the disc of time, a great coming event, casting its shadow before. Mr. Frederick Gye appears to me the very man in the right place to bring to pass this millenium of the drama. He seems, from what I have known of him from a boy, the very manager I have just attempted to describe, of a *real National Theatre:* gentlemanly, highly-educated, great taste, and great insight, without prejudice, and, as he always was, an admirer of the stage. Who knows, some day, and right soon, but the builder of that wonderful edifice Covent Garden, all concocted under the influence of his own strong mind, (my head *aches* to think how,)—who knows but while fostering the genius of the children of song, *he* may see a way from his leviathan ship to throw forth a safety rope towards the drowning children of Melpomene

and Thalia, and the sinking drama of his NATIVE land.

Receive, then, from my humble hand the olive leaf of hope, friends and disciples of the stage, (although I do not pretend to resemble a dove) I feel that the deluge which has so long overwhelmed you, is shortly about to abate, and that a bright sunshine remains behind. This *fervent and sincere prayer*, I trust may plead some excuse for the presumption of these remarks, since, for myself I ask nothing, especially of the stage. As regards *my* future, whether brief or long, what is to be, *will* be, I have seen and suffered too much to anticipate or dread the concluding scene. This little history I reiterate is such a one as cannot happen to another man, the same times cannot occur, to bring about the same round of circumstances, nor re-open the same way. The waters of time have closed over the chasm, like the path in the Red Sea; others may open, but not the same.

My life is almost that of a hermit. I do not like mixed society; that is not remarkable, I never did. My nervous deafness is a drawback; give me the domestic hearth, the familiar face that my heart has long become accustomed to; though, alas, the *one* face, so loved, and *so familiar* in joy and in grief, in health, and in sickness, has passed away from me, when its pale, endearing smile was most needed; but memory oft recalls it through a sad, but not unpleasing dream of the past. It is the only image of youth, and of love, that I cannot cease to regret. Time's horseman gallops on. The mind remains, thank God, as firm; but the body, like a tired pilgrim, worn with travel, longs to sit down on the footstep of some quiet sanctuary, be at rest, contemplate the events of past days, and indulge in delicious hopes of the future.

The sterling old Surrey still wears in itself, the same smiling feature as it did when I first cast therein the hazard of the die. But the old Covent Garden, in whose mys-

teries I was so early and *most* initiated, has disappeared. The old theatre, constructed by the Kembles, was a beautiful edifice, so perfect and convenient in every way, built after the plan of the Colloseum in Rome. In case of alarm or accident, an audience could have *been out of the theatre in five minutes*; no labyrinths to explore. The boxes were white and gold decorated, alternately, with the rose, thistle, and the shamrock; England was a much more national country in those old-fashioned times. On each side stood the white statues of Melpomene and Thalia, and the lion and unicorn were in the ascendent, supporting the royal arms. A rich *green* curtain, one of the greatest reliefs in a theatre, kept your head from aching, your eyes from being dazzled, and let you know when the play *was* over. This not yet surpassed theatre, for the want of national support, fell beneath *other* hands; of what became of its *native* actors, many a sad story might be told. An Italian Opera succeeded, beautiful, but

bewildering as a structure to comprehend. This theatre was burnt down during a conjuring exhibition, and *in a few brief months after*, Mr. Gye, of whom I have predicted so much good, has, more astounding than the labours of Hercules, built up a new edifice, radiant to behold, both inside and out; it is one of the most astonishing efforts, (when we consider the time,) of this, or any age. I have witnessed its magnificent opening, with delight and amazement; I only hope that the wonderful constructor of this wonderful building, may be spared from the heavy pressure which overwrought excitement is almost too sure to inflict upon its victims, to make this theatre, not only a national operatic, but in a national acting sense, a glory to his *country*.

A Dramatic Author.

A few words, by way of addenda, as to the profession and *object* of a dramatic author's life; *many* people object to it; parents especially. In my mind, there is nothing so noble, if properly, viz, morally

conducted; its sublime purpose is second to nothing, as the author himself is second to no one, neither of the pulpit, nor the bar, nor the senate; in the promulgation of virtue, of eloquence, of patriotism; in the attainment of imperishable fame. As a proof of this assertion, look at the undying works of Sophocles, Terence, Euripides, men whose glorious names have as much outlived their countries, as Julius Cæsar, Charlemagne, or Alexander the Great, to say nothing of the ever green, and ever spring-like beauties of our own immortal Shakspeare, although, the younger Zuccato says, the glory of man is no more than the sun is in the water, which reflects his image, there *is* still something in being *reflectable*. In thus writing, I do not allude to those ephemeral productions, so *insulting* to *common sense*, nightly represented at some of our minor theatres, which, though I have heard others praise them, and that loudly too, are merely, I feel assured, impelled into existence, and produced also, by

necessity, more than from the innate desire of either author or manager. A *real* author is always gifted by nature, with *elevated sentiments*, calculated to improve, not debase the human feelings, nor the mental faculties of his audience, for however low in life the scene of his drama may be laid, it ought always to retain that golden clue of redemption, (religion,) without its being so palpable as to appear like *cant*. It *is* possible to dissolve a whole audience into tears, with only four words, *judiciously placed;* or to convulse them with laughter, by the simplest *natural* expression, without in the least resorting to absurdity, or sinking into vulgarity, or personality, as we see in the burlesques. But alas, too frequently, as above stated, both author and manager are *compelled*, by necessity, to what is called cater for the vitiated taste of the public, and fall, for pecuniary aid, into a *crime*, for *crime* it is, which must, I feel, find its greatest recompence in *avoidence*. The better to illustrate this argument, if argument it can

be called, I relate here a fact which occurred to myself at the very outset of my career. The unlooked-for effect of my melodrames on the public, induced the then managers of the Surrey, to give me an engagement of six, if not eight pounds per week, by which I bound myself to write for them on *any* subject they might propose, never dreaming of *such* a subject as they did eventually suggest,

The Murder of Wear, by Thurtle.

My blood absolutely chilled at the proposition. I was at that time in great involvements, in delicate health, in fact, without any means but my pen and my engagement. Troubles of every kind stared me in the face, but I resolved neither to degrade myself, my family, nor my reputation, by the comittal of such an atrocity; and although it was held out to me as a *strong* temptation, by the manager, that he had actually purchased the *real shovel* and *cart* connected with the murder, to assist in the *reality* of the intended production,

young as I *then* was, I indignantly threw up my engagement, and quitted the theatre in disgust. Still there was another author who could not perhaps *resist necessity*, and the delight of placing himself in an enviable position, if not altogether willing, did undertake the loathsome task. The piece was both written and represented to *one overwhelming* audience. Whether they played it without a license I know not, but certainly, the Lord Chamberlain *immediately put it down*, to the great satisfaction of the respectable members of that and every other parish in London. Be it remembered the event of which I write, occurred *many* years ago, and reflects great credit on the Surrey Theatre, as to what it soon after that solitary circumstance became, and still remains, one of our most respectable theatres, being managed by gentlemen, (Elliston to wit). In fact, I sincerely believe that this determination of mine to resist necessity, and not lend myself to such a revolting purpose, and its just result, brought about

a perfect revolution in that property, on whose boards the most interesting and beautiful dramas have been since produced; as for instance, that gem of national natural feeling and sympathy, by Douglas Jerrold,

Black Eyed Susan.

As a further illustration of what I have recently stated, respecting making your audience laugh by simple means, look at one of the comic characters in this charming drama, Gnatbrain. Where are the eyes that have not twinkled with mirth and delight at his simply stepping out of the closet, Meadows, with the rolling pin in his hand, with two or three quaint words only. A similar comic effect was produced by a mop in "Auld Robin Grey"—but rolling pins and mops are dangerous properties on the stage, if not twirled or brandished by very experienced hands; and still more so, if not placed in well-thought-of positions. But these are minor trifles, of which the loftier play-writer would take but scornful cognizance. Still, studied in their more impor-

tant and difficult light, than *he* in his seventh heaven dreams of, they would supply even to *his* high sounding epics, a practical lesson, from the want of a knowledge of which the tragedy of the greatest Greek or Latin scholar in the world (Irene) failed to please. I think, in dramatic justice, I am bound to add, here, by way of *morale*, for my young successors, that in less than a week, from my resignation at the Surrey, I had *two* engagements at *two* other theatres, with exactly *doubled* the amount of salary; and when my old manager saw his folly and mistake, and came to offer me *any* terms to return, he was too late; for which I felt some regret, for, nothwithstanding all this, he was a very honest and well-disposed man. And we are all of us liable to error, especcially where gain is in the perspective. He shortly after wisely relinquished the theatre, and is, if alive, I hope enjoying the result of his past prosperity.*

* When I was a boy, residing in Norwich, John Thurtle being of a most respectable family, was accustomed to visit

Now to tie the last knot of my *long* spun yarn, I fear I must *long* since have become tedious to the enduring reader. A few more words to the

Non-Conductors of the Drama,

and I have done. By the non-conductors of the drama, I allude to people of puritanical principles, who reject the *rational* amusements of the stage, without knowing *why* or *wherefore*, founding their *great* apprehension on the sublime principle of making unto themselves "the likeness of anything in heaven above, or earth beneath," (a charge to which I'm sure, many of our every-day actors could plead not guilty.) They who raise this ridiculous objection, do not assuredly understand the real translated meaning of that wise injunction, which

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at the house of a gentleman, where I, also, was on terms of intimacy with the younger branches, the sons. On one occasion John, who was a smart dashing fellow, sent the lady, as a present, a basket of fine trout, inviting himself to dine on the occasion. The gratitude of the lady knew no bounds, till some months after, her own fishmonger sent in a bill for the trout, which had been set down to *her* account, and for which she had to pay.

simply alluded to, (in the darker ages of superstion, the crying sin even with Solomon,) the ignorant worship of idols, or the worship of anything on earth or in heaven, (meaning the angels) except the DIVINITY. There is no other way of *expounding* this prohibition. By going to a theatre, a man does not go to idolise or worship the actors, or to bow down to them. He goes to listen to the moralising language which flows like a current of inspiration from the heaven-lighted brain of genius, through the *lips* of the performers (as the hallowed strain of sacred music to which the hater of the drama so frequently listens with awe and devotion,) flows from the solemn organ of a church or cathedral. He goes to see the vices of mankind pictured as in a glass, in their *true* colours, and punished as they deserve, that he may, thereby, receive a lesson of moral instruction; discover, without difficulty, the real path which leads to future peace, or conducts to endless annihilation. What doctrine can be more sublime? And this in

practical illustrations of life as it absolutely exists—examples of good and evil, which, thus conveyed, press themselves how much more deeply on the heart, than a mere book or a homily. Mere language, eloquent as it may be, *cannot* approach such an example. When we read works of the greatest purity, the parables for instance, do we not, in the *theatre* of *our mind's eye*, personifiy and *dress* the different characters spoken of by the Apostles, as if they were actually before us—in our presence? If then, this invisible agency, in the theatre of the mind, is lighted up by the inspiration of our Maker, what better principle can we imitate to impress upon the expanding thought, especially of youth, the certain recompence of rectitude, or the certain punishment of crime? Even taking it away from this religious sense, to the history of our country, or that of others, what book is equal to the delineations, where the *eye* can read *at once* sentiments, the most noble, patriotic, and elevating to

the mind of man? How many thousands are there who owe their entire knowledge of the history of England to Shakspere *on the stage?* Had Shakspere been locked up in the library, instead of being represented on the boards of a theatre, with all his magnificent points on every possible subject, he would have been about as popular as Spencer's "Faierie Queen;" and the millions upon millions who have been edified by his almost unearthly, and instructive genius, have known less about this country, and all those great lessons of the heart, which Shakspere teaches, than of "Little Jack Horner."

Intellect, aided by the mighty progress of science, which has discovered the appliances of steam to propel loads of enormous magnitude, sent gas through the dark crevices of the earth to lighten cities, laid telegraph cables under the mighty and mysterious deep to hasten telegrams from one end of the world to the other, will, I trust speedily, and in my brief rem-

nant of time, also, discover some great *mental* appliance to the glory—the *permanent enduring* glory of the stage, so sanctified to all classes of society, that no man, whatever his religion, shall longer be ashamed to show his face in a theatre, nor hold up the drama to his son as a stigma and a sin. The mind of every one, at intervals, requires change—a rational amusement, quite as much as the chairs and tables require dusting, or an apartment to be swept or that mind becomes dull, melancholy, if not *morose*, by preying too much upon itself. What amusement can be more rational than a well-written play, well performed, in a well-conducted theatre? —especially when you consider the instruction imperceptibly instilled during its representation. Listen to what the pious Dr. Blair says, who evidently, by the word "improving," alludes to the drama, in his *Use and Abuse of the World.*—"They "have been *supposed* to be the best servants "of God, who abstain most rigidly from

" all that has the *appearance* of *amusement*.
" But how pious and sincere soever the
" *intention* of such persons may be, they
" certainly take not the properest method
" either for *improving* themselves, or for
" advancing religion amongst others."*

The ethereal mantle which I anticipated, would alight on the shoulders of that modern Hercules of modern architecture, Mr. Frederic Gye, threaded in light, seems operatically to have descended on those of Miss Louisa Pyne, and Mr. William Harrison. The music-loving public owe to *their* talents, taste, and perseverance, a deep debt of gratitude. Every Englishman, every English

* During the reign of Augustus, had stage representations been deemed immoral, could they have escaped the disapproval of the Apostles, from whom no impiety could escape? St. Paul even, (in his writings,) refers to the dramatic poets in confirmation of his own sentiments. And what does Dr. Tillotson say? Speaking of plays, he says—" They might be so framed as not only to be inno-
" cently diverting, but conducive to virtue and morality;
" and serve to put vices out of countenance which could
" not be decently corrected any other way." Plutarch thought plays essential to polish and refine the manners of a nation, and instill the noblest principles of honour and virtue.

woman, also, with a single note of melody in his, or her soul, *ought* to support them. If *they* fail, good night, not to Marmion, but to our national Apollo. Public taste, public appreciation, is *nothing;* music to English ears, a chimera, and a boast.

But if we have national opera at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden, and the legitimate drama at Drury Lane, according to the early patent, viz., Tragedy, Comedy, Farce, and Pantomime, the national stage may lift up its head again, the old school of acting revive, and the old statue of Shakspear, over the vestibule of the latter theatre, be no longer ashamed to show its face. Of this last, however, I somewhat despair, unless, as I have before said, national aid will assist its own, and its own Majesty's Servants. After the admirable Macready management, and its failure, who can think otherwise? Mr. Smith has of late years, with great endurance, great tact, and great honour, (paying every one to the utmost,) made Drury Lane answer, but has been

compelled to resort to every known contrariety to the original patent on the surface of the globe, singing, in a *foreign* language, (which when, Charles Kemble years ago would have adopted, merely a scene from a foreign opera for his benefit, the Lord Chamberlain objected to,) dancing, horses, tumblers, and before all, to rely on pantomime. And who is to blame him? Mr. Smith has no objection to Shakspere, or Sheridan; on the contrary, I never met with a manager more enthusiastic in the cause of both tragedy or comedy, but if your ship is leaking, and the state carpenter, who should stop the gap, looks still and coldly on, how doubly brave and meritorious is the captain, who plunges fearlessly into the discordant waters, and with a stray cable of his own finding, drags his bark ashore the best way he can.

Sunny Balfe has returned, once more to enlist under the old banner, and fight, ere long, heart and hand, through a new campaign, by the side of his old comrade at

the "Siege of Rochelle." With this sparkling announcement, without further remark as to the future, for who shall look deep down into the opaque of time and say "what seed will grow and what will not." The second volume of a Thirty-five Years Life comes to a conclusion with about the pleasantest line (to himself,) the author ever wrote in any one of his dramatic works.

ACT LAST—SCENE LAST.

Curtain falls.

END OF VOL II.

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